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Cacophony, chaos can play viable role in modern music

Recently, while flipping through a collection of writings by the late rock critic Lester Bangs, I came across an article where Bangs presented a guide to recordings of chaotic, cacophonous music that he affectionately referred to as "horrible noise." He argued that such music had an invigorating quality and served a distinct purpose in our society.

In these days of heightened production values and clean-cut arrangements, the importance of cacophony has been mostly forgotten. You'll still hear it occasionally at some rock concerts, when bands will just wail on their instruments for half a minute. It's usually a gimmick to signal the end of the show, but it really isn't a compositional element.

But as a number of 20th-century avant-garde composers proved, noise, chaos and cacophony can all work in a composition. The only limit on music is the frame that an artist puts around it. Once they make a noise — or don't make a noise, as in the case of the John Cage composition that consists of four minutes and 33 seconds of silence — and call that noise music, it is up to the audience to decide whether they will accept it as music. I find that I will accept it as such in many cases. If I can find a groovy rhythm in a passing freight train, I can certainly enjoy some of the delirious noise that musicians have put on record.

So, in memory of Mr. Bangs, I have decided to form the Society for the Preservation of Horrible Noise in Music, or SPHNM. Suggested recordings and monetary donations are being accepted. On that note, here is a list of a few of my favorite bits of audio terrorism, minus the selections already



Ryan Nyburg
Budget rack

compiled by Bangs. Feel free to write in with further suggestions, so that I can get another easy column out of this.

Beat Happening, "This Many Boyfriends Club": The closing track on this Olympia, Wash. band's classic "Jamboree" album. It's a live recording consisting of lead singer Calvin Johnson crooning over the howl and squeal of a feedbacking guitar. A haunting little ditty punctuated by the audience screaming in either ecstasy or agony, depending on who you ask.

The Mothers of Invention, "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Sexually Aroused Gas Mask": Another live track, this one off of "Weasels Ripped My Flesh," a compilation of material left over after Frank Zappa broke up the Mothers. The track is full of grinding feedback, maniacal laughter, drunken opera and other bits of glorious cacophony. It's kind of like music concrete re-created live.

The Ornette Coleman Double Quartet, "Free Jazz": This jazz experiment is about as close a recorded work has ever come to sustained anarchy. For nearly 40 minutes, Coleman and every member of his band play essentially whatever they feel like, occasionally coming together for a

moment or two, but mostly just deviating as far apart from each other as possible. Trance music for the ages.

Sonic Youth, "Scooter & Jinx": After moving to a major label, there was some speculation that Sonic Youth might try to soften their sound for mass consumption. But this track, off their major label debut "Goo," dispelled any fears of selling out. For just over a minute, layers of overdubbed guitars grind away with glorious dissonance, evoking images of a motorcycle gang ready to conquer the heartland of an unsuspecting America.

Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band, "Hair Pie: Bake 1": One of the noisier efforts off Beefheart's classic "Trout Mask Replica" album. An instrumental piece that starts off with the entire band playing horns simultaneously. About half way through, drums and some atonal guitars kick in. The whole thing ends with what sounds like a member of the band talking to some unsuspecting passers-by. Pure dada music.

John Cage, "Music of Changes," performed by Joseph Kobera: A good example of Cage's theory of "indeterminism," which removes choice from musical composition. The musical passages are selected by flipping 1 Ching coins. To most listeners, it sounds like a guy banging random notes on a piano at strange intervals. As with most of these selections, it's not for everyone. For those who fancy chaos, it's a masterpiece.

Contact the senior Pulse reporter at ryannyburg@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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Sexy 'Cabaret' production sizzles

The Very Little Theatre's performance of 'Cabaret' is hot and heavy and worth the ticket for admission

By **Natasha Chilingerian**
Pulse Reporter

The musical "Cabaret," whether on stage or on screen, is full of glamour, glitter and sex. In The Very Little Theatre's production, these glitzy

elements take command, but the real backbone of the show is a hard-hitting history lesson.

The musical drama, presented in the 75-year-old venue located at 2350 Hilliard St., tells a heartbreaking tale of destroyed relationships in early Nazi Germany. When a straight-laced American writer, Cliff Bradshaw (played by the lanky boyish Evan Howells), arrives in

Berlin to work on a novel, he finds the lights and free living of the city quite a distraction. He is seduced by a nightclub singer, Sally Bowles (played by the sultry Liz Kadel), who promptly moves into the rented room where he resides.

The two continue to "live in sin" among a cast of carefree characters, including a blond female tenant with a sailor fetish and their elderly German landlord, Fraulein Schneider, who falls in love with a jolly Jewish grocer, Herr Shultz. They all go about their

business with an "anything goes" perspective until the rising power of the Nazi party turns their laid-back world upside down.

The Emcee at the local night club, the Kit Kat Club (played by the charming, charismatic Tegue DeLeon) ties the show together with bright comical sketches that comment on issues within the plot. In one scene, a woman and a man in drag depict the characters' unrestrained lifestyles by singing behind a blanket. In another, the Emcee dances with a gorilla, metaphorically explaining how the public views Schneider's inter-cultural relationship with Shultz. The interjected skits add a little extra thought-provoking and creative entertainment to the already captivating production.

The rapport between Schneider and Shultz brings a touching aspect to the musical. The actors show a genuine care for one another, and Shultz is precious and generous in his courting of Schneider, which centers around gifts of fruit and leads to an engagement.

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