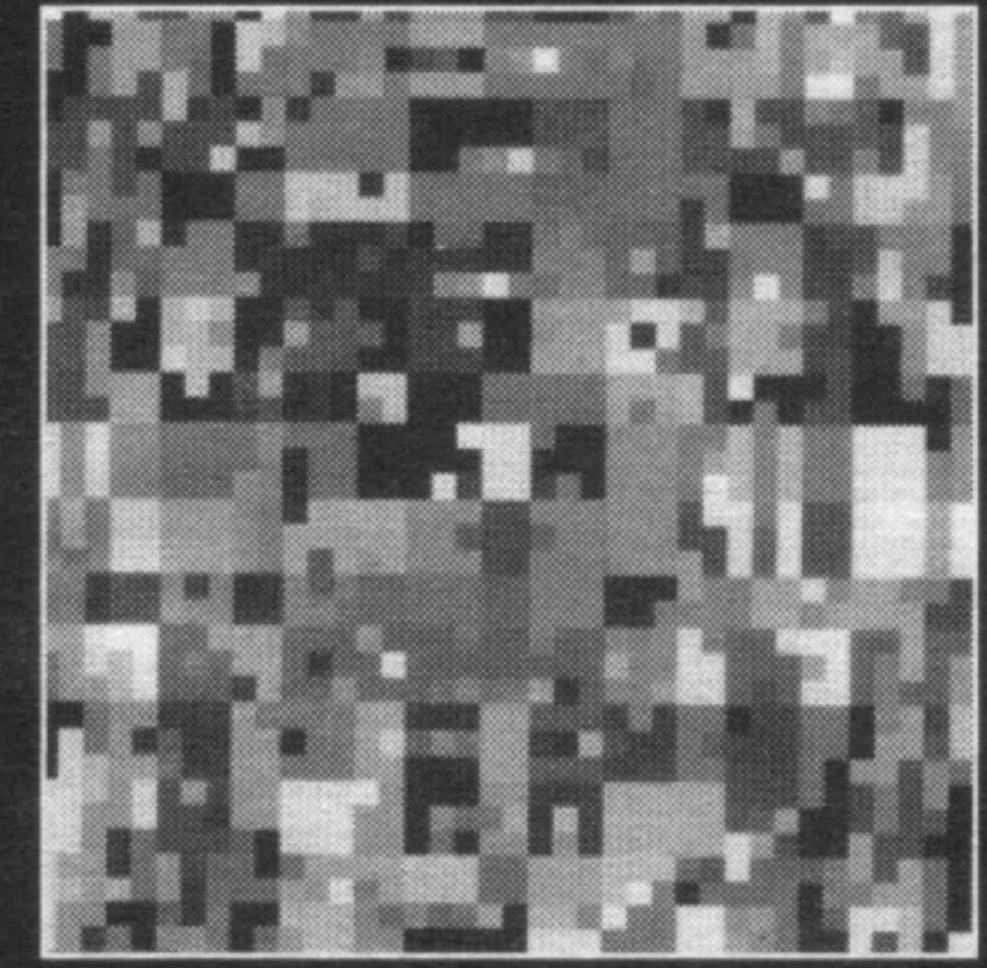


Label Profile

Recorded in Brooklyn in 2004 as part of the free103point9-sponsored "Assembled: Free Jazz + Electronics" festival, the self-titled disc by **N.R.A.** is an artifact of a single 40+ minute improvisation (metered out into 16 discrete servings) by the trio of Tatsuya Nakatani (percussion), Vic Rawlings (open-circuit electronics, amplified prepared cello), and Ricardo Arias (bass-balloon kit). The performance cleaves in two, pivoting kinetically around a single point of reference to forked affect. The first half is given to an athletic, urgent assemblage of power tool and irritable bowel timbres, howling were-buffalo, and construction site shouting matches demanding urgently the concrete to divide. If there is a match champion here it is certainly Arias with his arresting manipulation of balloons and electronics, unsympathetic but with singular enough personality and energy as to demand the right to scowl and stampede in the front row. Having run out of chest-pumping identity-defining theatrics, or simply finding the back door open, around the 10th track indicator, the trio began telling stories and from then on it is difficult to remain passive in appreciation with another 15 minutes or so of mesmerizing unity of purpose. Fading away somewhat after its time, as if disheartened by the background voices that one hears as the volume drops, the piece expires with a self-conscious whimper, rather too cruel a prologue to commit to tape for such a previously bold and masculine sonic encounter.

On the untitled disc by **Graduation**, you will find the following among the sparse liner notes typed onto the back of what looks like a handmade black and white CDR sleeve: "Thanks to the guy who loaned Nels [Cline] the blown Twin Reverb." Facetious or not, it's funny—that amp was headed for fuckeddom either way. The trio that is Graduation (hopefully not a one-off) is comprised of noise all-star saxophonist Chris Corsano (Thurston Moore, Jim O'Rourke, No Neck Blues Band), electronicist Carlos Giffoni (Monotract, curator of Brooklyn's Woodstock of noise, the No Fun Fest) and Nels Cline (pretty much everybody). Track one features two pieces recorded live at a free103-sponsored event in the Office Ops warehouse space; track two finds Giffoni performing "molecular reconfigurations" of side one: both are as faultless on their own terms as they are uncompromising and self-assured. The trio packages the improvisation as compelling, well-wrought and effortless. Giffoni's careful/careless remix never lets the meticulousness of desk-craft overshadow the brutalists' ethos: exhausting and true. Both artifact and art object, this un-glamorously packaged limited CD dispatch should be snatched up by anyone who trafficks within the Bulb/Hanson Records, Skin Graft, Load catalogs and the discerning half-deaf ear those travels bring.

While **Skyline** declares *Private Sectors* a "9-track case against genre" the music is not so much difficult or resistant to categorization as it is an outsiders' compendium of genre, the simultaneous haunted traces, spectral residues, and damaged indices of recorded genre-based music, represented and referenced free of muscular manipulation and contrivance. The low fidelity, scattershot construction and utter "worn-ness" of its individual elements (jungle loops, plundered world-music samples, record scratches, delay 'n' decay wall of sound-ism, Jandek-y improvisations) create not so much a deconstruction and questioning of genre as an anxiety-laden response to the recorded world's overpopulation, as well as its mutability and transience. Like much of the programming on sponsor free103point9's web-radio



broadcasts, Skyline's music parades from point A to point D without circling back over its tracks, without internal reference—it is open-ended, mercurial and discards the teleological baggage off its sources straightaway. In truth, an endless stream of what sounds like canned IDM Acid loops are grating from the beginning, subjugating all other sounds in its path without offering much pleasure, ecstasy, or dance-ability in consolation. By the end of the record, however, it is the endless monotony and sterility of the beat sources, combined with their unstable position in the mix and general lack of gloss that contribute to the overriding sense that Skyline's music is ultimately about refuse, refusal, and the smog that hangs over radio's graveyard. If not exactly exciting sonically, its purposelessness and drift, the "artlessness" of its strut, is worthy of consideration and not entirely lacking in generosity once you've put in the time.

A fixture on the New York sound art scene for several years, transmission media arts organization free103's Tune(In)) events invite musicians and new media artists of all stripes to perform simultaneously into radio transmitters in a public space with attendees interfacing with all performers across frequency bands via a pair of headphones. A growing number of documentary releases from these events are available via free103's "Audio Dispatch" release series, such as the one entitled *Audio Dispatch 11*. While chance encounter on the radio dial and the disconnection between sound image may heighten the otherworldly impact of some of these pieces, the majority of them stand solidly well alone. While Sybarite's "Secropia" is a slightly more interesting jaunt into St. Germain NPR-jazz remix territory, 100% Storms Ensemble takes on the electroacoustic interface more directly in a "radio suite" version of a piece for solo clarinet and harmonic pedal; discrete quartet performances were re-shaped during the microcast, overlapping in a warm saline taped stew. Excerpts from the Skyline and Transmaniacon MC pieces showcase energetic turntablist excursions that eschew finesse for spirit, and Metalux and No Fun Festival impresario Carlos Giffoni provides a maddening 20 minute tape-based noise composition, a windmill of brutality and telescoped silences that frustrate but open into unexpected bits of sampled delicacy; silly and refreshing. Unfortunately, a similar chain of "cut-out" silences due to mastering errors on the reviewer's copy prohibited the

enjoyment of Michelle Nagai's soundwalk, a hazard of the CDR release format.

On *Crossed Circuits*, an archival release documenting events at Brooklyn's Hogar Collection curated by sculptor Todd Rosenbaum and free103 affiliated artist Damian Catera, are pieces presented alongside photography, sculpture, painting, drawing and other media, dialogically. Free103 founder Tom Roe turns a turntable collage of warped windsails and mechanized teapots in heady shades of calm concrete, and frequent collaborator Matt Bua's "Undergrowth March" is an outstanding glossary of double bass and reed phonemes, freed from instrumental context, mingling with distant sine waves, latex squeaks and low gamelan-esque overtones; the editing is transparent and the environment created is extraordinarily engaging. Radio transmission theater company 31 Down fairs less favorably on disc, with an answering machine collage that exploits rather than explores the break-up theme. Infamous conversation thief Scanner builds an environmental construction reminiscent more of DeMarinis' lovely linguistic treatments than Negativland-ish speech act, finding a confident glossolalic stride. Catera's collaboration with painter/gallery co-owner Cecilia Biagini is well-wrought but with a forced and flat-lying animosity it fails to rescue the well-worn DSP-guitar game from the over-trampling of folks like David First and Robert Poss. Michelle Nagai is a founding member of the American Society for Acoustic Ecology and her field-recording—thumb piano, insect, jeep, windchimes and wailing—could seem a bit anthropologically reductive if it weren't held together by an unidentifiable and almost continuous veil of alluring surface noise, devolving into laughter and mystery toward the end. Ben Owen extracts a Ford factory's worth of sound from prepared guitars (somewhat marred by distracting stereo manipulation). Mikas' collage of various rhetorical recordings and Melissa Dubbin's / Aaron S. Davidson's low fidelity, maniacally minimal electronics are both as charming for their fierce adherence to limitation as frustrating. Tianna Kennedy's nine minute-plus piece for cello begins with filaments of extended sticking and acrobatics stretching boldly into the world of Mark Dresser but a steadily growing bleed of environmental headwind and humane overdubs dreams the piece into a landscape both alien and emotionally true.

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