

Living Today



DEEP IN THE FOREST:



Photo contributed
 "Stars Like Fleas of Brooklyn," plays in July 2006 at the Wave Farm, balancing "their disturbing, harsh, confrontational (and somehow still delicate) improvisation with undeniably direct, sincere, silly, joyous and unashamedly romantic songs. Their set will incorporate wind and air physically and thematically," according to the music foundation's literature.

Enjoying the sounds of nature or the sounds of experimental music

By Alvaro E. Alarcon
 Hudson-Catskill Newspapers

CAIRO — An Acra foundation dedicated to experimental radio music promises edgy concerts just as much as it promises a quiet retreat for artists looking for a cloistered experience in the forest to examine just how far a musical instrument can go.

It's a 29-acre spread of both cleared and pine forested land off Route 23 in Acra, up the sleek ascent into Windham in the Catskill Mountains. A tan-colored wooden sign on the outside gives the plot — highlighted by orange construction cones on the highway marking a drive with no house in sight — a name: Free103point9 Wave Farm.

The FM radio station that plays there and is broadcast on the Internet fills the land of noise, although a wanderer through the paths there wouldn't have guessed it. That is unless a pair of headphones is worn to capture the station's frequency, drowning out the sounds of birds and chipmunks gathering forage in late summer with avant-garde music.

"This is very much a labor of love," said Galen Joseph-Hunter, who lives on the land in a split-level house with her husband and Wave Farm Program Director Tom Roe and their infant. "This is what our life's work is about...the organization is growing and doing very well."

In the 10 years since its inception, the radio station has been located in Brooklyn where Joseph-Hunter and Roe have roots, until it expanded to Acra in 2004. It has attracted the attention of grant-giving institutions such as the New York State Council for the Arts, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and through a funding program by the Greene County Council on the Arts, the Greene County Legislature.

"Jazz was once a very experimental form and now it's widely accepted," said Roe.

The emphasis at the Wave Farm, which has space for resident artists, is experimentation.

"That's an important part of our mission as a nonprofit: it's to be a resource for artists and audiences," said Galen-Hunter, who like her husband, was interviewed one August weekday afternoon in the quiet of their kitchen over tea.

And maybe that "mission", as Galen-Hunter put it, never became more apparent than one Saturday evening in late August on the stage that fills the expanse of the property, hidden from the road by trees. At 6 p.m. families, some ready to camp out overnight in tents, listened to the sounds of music that to the uninitiated seemed like a radical departure from the songs constantly repeated on mainstream radio.

The show that evening was called "Animals," curated by "Slink" Moss of the Slink Moss Orchestra. The show benefited Animal Kind, an animal benevolent organization located in Hudson.

"If you do work about animals it opens a lot of possibilities for expression," said Moss.

Most of the musicians there that evening, coming from a number of groups including Evolution Revolution, Owl, Latitude/Longitude, consider themselves multi-instrumentalists. Drums meanwhile resonate in the background.

"It's evolving, every time I come here it's different...it's really interesting. We're trying to put music and people in different settings and switch it up," said Moss.

The stage is part of a larger structure built like a large lean-to similar to the type found on hiking trails, partially open to the fresh air and



Photo contributed
 "EarthSpeaker" is "sonic sculpture," composed of solar-powered, electro-acoustic speakers, emitting low-frequency sounds at dusk. It is tucked in the woods of the Wave Farm.

facing out toward the field and adjacent grassy parking lot. In the structure, housing audiovisual equipment, is an exhibit of the whole basis of the Wave Farm.

The "Puff, Bang, Reverb" exhibit shows what could easily be...
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Photo contributed
 "Studies for Radio Transceiver" in July 2006 shows what the Wave Farm is supposed to be about: playing with radio equipment and seeing what noise, sounds and music comes about.



Photo contributed
 "Slink" Moss plays the drums as part of the Slink Moss Orchestra in the August 25 concert "Animals" at the Acra Wave Farm, which exposed listeners to music with an Animal Kingdom theme. Moss was the curator of the concert.



Photo contributed

Brooklyn-based artists in Latitude/Longitude Michael Garofalo and Patrick McCarthy started performing in 2004 and were at the August "Animals" concert. "Teasing melodies out of prepared and alternately tuned guitars while electronics murmur in a nest of instrument cables at their feet, the duo weave electro-acoustic dream songs from cross-circuit chaos," according to Wave Farm literature.

Music

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ily be several hundred thin aircraft cables hanging from the ceiling, with dangling wooden blocks at their ends. Blowing slightly through the wires pushes a suspended board, triggering an electronic mechanism that makes the seemingly hundred of small wooden blocks move in a

sound wave-like motion.

And sound abounded that Saturday in the clear late August air, with an offbeat experimental rock playing from the stage.

"I play a lot of different things," said Michael Garofalo a visitor from Brooklyn. He, like several others there that

evening, called himself a multi-instrumentalist.

Part of Garofalo's assemblage of instruments in the Mbira, a Zimbabwean thumb piano known to be used in elementary school music classes. If there is any requirement for being at the Wave Farm that evening, it's to keep an open mind and be open to experimentation with instruments not necessarily found at the local music shop.

He said events at the Wave Farm like that evening's are getting more and more popular, bringing to audience members there a sense of community. "It's sort of a hub where a lot of new ideas are meeting."

Children were running about, there with their families, while the most of the crowd were people in the 20s and 30s.

"It's a very beautiful piece of land they're using it in a way that's very innovating and exciting," said Luisa Kildiss, a Hudson librarian. "It's a nice place to come with your dog and your kids."

The Wave Farm is at 5662 Route 23 in Acra. For information, visit the web site www.free103point9.org