

The Art of Eldritch Noise:

A Music Manifesto for the New Leaders of the Eldritch Cult

1 NOISE MUSIC TODAY

Experimental music today takes on many forms and styles and embraces a huge range of interesting and exciting sounds, compositions, performances, and more. There will never be an end to the evolution of sonic exploration and noise music generation, nor should it be desired that it ever come to an end. Instead, it is the aim of this manifesto that sonic exploration, perhaps most specifically dark ambient soundscapes, but certainly others as well, are nurtured and cultivated; perhaps even to the point of becoming household music and, in some sense, popular. More specifically, though, the goal of this call to action is a fine tuning of compositional and performative efforts that encompasses both the art of noise making put forth initially by Luigi Russolo and other Italian Futurists and the expression of emotive darkness found within the literature of H. P. Lovecraft and fellow Mythos tale authors.

Many sound artists are familiar with, and even incorporate the mentalities and aural elements of Futurist music. Others are well acquainted with the works of Lovecraft, and produce material influenced by narratives within the cannon. This is a fantastic means of engaging one's music, and I do not mean to belittle these excellent creative directions, but in the eyes of what I am calling "The Eldritch Cult", or those who see the extremely high value of Lovecraftian tales and Futurist music as being the ultimate source of influence on personal creative efforts, it is not enough to merely embrace one or the other or do so in an occasional, part-time manner. Some innovative composers and musicians already engage both Lovecraft and Futurism, of course, and praise to them for doing so, but they are not excluded from this call to action, simply because they have exhibited that they understand the importance of their role(s) as musical leaders in the world of experimental sound. On the contrary, this manifesto comes at a time when sonic exploration may be at its most active, and therefore, the potential to stray from Lovecraftian influence and Futurist mentalities is great and often distracting, eroding the very foundation of the Eldritch Cult's musical community!

Within this manifesto, I propose a consistent commitment to the composition and performance of music that upholds ties to the two greatest influences of creative endeavors as seen by the Eldritch Cult; I propose why Lovecraft and Russolo are individually important to experimental musicians and why they are the perfect match for combined creative forces to engage Eldritch noise music; and I put forth a specific call to action, asking known artists within the circles of the Eldritch Cult to lead the way, and create new pieces embracing the sentiments outlined here to build a specific body of sonic works that will both form the base for this all important style as well as encourage other artists to join the Eldritch Cult as new leaders in the art of Eldritch noise!

2 LOVECRAFT AND MYTHOS CULTURE

Lovecraft, often considered to be the master of horror literature, or at least an extremely innovative author who forged a number of narrative directions and styles within the genre, establishing it concretely alongside and drawing from Gothic, science fiction, and first-wave Steampunk, left behind a body of stories that is undoubtedly taken as being highly influential amongst many creators of various artistic endeavors. As mentioned above, those who I am calling members of the Eldritch Cult, in fact, consider Lovecraft's works (and the massive amount of spin-off literature, film, visual art, theatre, and more) as being THE most influential constructed universe. Part of the beauty of Lovecraft's realm is that many narratives offered various "puzzle pieces" that when bridged together formed a larger universe that encapsulate a pantheon of beings and happenings that make up the bulk of the original Lovecraftian Mythos. Even though the tales and characters found within Lovecraft's work which serve to facilitate presenting these puzzles pieces encompasses a wide spectrum in all terms of writing style, situations, settings, aesthetics, and more, there exists an underlying theme amongst them, put forth clearly by Lovecraft himself when he stated, "Man's greatest emotion is fear, and the greatest fear is fear of the unknown."

I would venture to say that in the case of Lovecraft's characters, it may be more precise to say the tremendous emotive force is a shift from fear of the unknown to fear of the known, but for the reader, in an exegetic position, the fear of the unknown is definitely the driving force behind the narratives. Many authors (and other creatives) have explored this notion in many ways and brought to fruition a plethora of tales, characters, and settings infinitely diverse, but that still remain true to the nature of the body of literature.

For purposes of discussion, it is useful to point out that some literature is Lovecraftian in nature, whilst others are Mythos related, and it is not necessary that a work be both to be one or the other. For example, a story that retains a strong element of style that is akin to Lovecraft's works, but does not directly relate the story or characters to Lovecraft's Mythos (or other associated Mythos expansions by subsequent authors/creators) is not necessarily a work of Mythos fiction; and a work that is centered around Mythos characters, may or may not be Lovecraftian in nature. This does not mean that a work is less well conceived than another if falls into one category, but not the other. Some argue that because a Mythos character is mentioned within a story, that story does not automatically become a Mythos tale, but that splitting of hairs is beyond the scope of this manifesto. The point to be made here is that there are multiple ways through which one can embrace Lovecraft's influence (the inclusion of subtle "puzzle pieces" to bridge works, direct reference to characters and settings within Mythos literature, et cetera), however, generally speaking, aesthetics that possess a healthy acknowledgement of a fear of the unknown is a primary factor in presenting Lovecraftian material.

3 FUTURISM AND THE ART OF NOISE

Futurism, and particularly the sentiments surrounding sound and musical composition approaches put forth by Luigi Russolo (and other Futurist composers, performers, and instrument builders) set the stage at the beginning of the 20th Century for experimenting with sound. It is probably fair to assume that anyone reading this will be extremely familiar with Futurist music, but to be clear,

Futurism (specifically Russolo, in his manifesto, *The Art of Noise* (1913)) called for embracing the “noises of the future” (in a simplified explanation) by generating new instruments that made new sounds or playing standard instruments with new techniques, through which, a simulation of modernity could be created. Modernity, in the eyes of the Futurists, however, is not to be completely congruent with development or pleasantries of an advanced society. Industrialization, war, machines (and accidents involving machines), and various other horrific and bleak possibilities exist within the Futurist outlook on life. Furthermore, a possible return to a more “primitive” way of thinking, including embracing Pagan and occult practices was a fringe mentality amongst Futurist thinkers, including Luigi Russolo.

To clarify, Italian Futurism (followed loosely by Russian Futurism and by seemingly opposing, but simultaneously somewhat parallel ideas inherent in Dadaism) suggests that music be created that emulates sounds of a possible future – and therefore can be considered to be sounds that represent both a potentially bleak and horrific future and/or an unknown future, most commonly one in which machinery, cultural clashes, dystopian settings, or ruined urban areas piled high with broken factory parts and destroyed buildings may be rampant, giving way to sensations of movement/motion (both corporal movement such as someone running or mechanical movement as with devices operating or engines turning), and experiments in “black science” (the making of bombs, power plants fueled by unethical means, et cetera) are depicted alongside potential rituals, magic, and the supernatural (at least in some Futurist circles).

To create the sounds of Futurist music, Russolo and his colleagues made a variety of new instruments – noisemakers that were intended to emulate the sonic-scapes of these possible futures, through instruments he called *Intonarumori* (atonal noise generators). It is through the construction and sounds made on these instruments that Futurist music forged a path for experimental sonic artists of all types. The encouragement to build new means to create sounds (including the later mentality of Dadaists that suggested a rethinking of intended usages for a manufactured item could lead to new ways to embrace an item as art or as a means to facilitate art, in this case, music making), fueled many other avant garde musical approaches, from the Black Mountain school of thought to “small instrument” making by members of the Associations for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, to contemporary circuit benders and improv artists’ utilization of extended techniques on standard instruments and including household objects as musical instruments amongst their sonic arsenal.

4 MUSIC AND THE ELDRITCH CULT

When a member of the Eldritch Cult’s musical community desires to create sounds that follow the sentiments of Lovecraftian / Mythos tales, what better path can be taken, then, but to adopt a Futurist approach to music making and composition? The aesthetic of unknown sounds that evoke a sense of fear can be explored through the range of unfamiliar sounds generated through creating a new instrument that has a slightly unrecognizable timbre or reassigns an item’s intended use to bring about a new sound, a new technique, or a new method of composing that can more rigorously represent Lovecraftian feelings and emotions. Here, I do not mean to discount tonal approaches to music nor do I wish to imply that more accessible composition, instrumentation, and performance techniques are unacceptable in terms of generating Lovecraftian music. They have great value and it is far more important that Lovecraftian music be produced in any style or through any means, than for this paramount influence to be ignored, but the purpose of this manifesto is to put forth that composers,

performers, and producers engage in more (and even primarily in) making Lovecraft-inspired works and within these new creations, use Futurist approaches to sound generation to fully enhance the Lovecraftian nature of the music being made.

(on a side, but related note: in addition to the unique and unfamiliar timbres generated by Russolo's *Intonarumori*, many of these instruments were made as "black box" devices, meaning that the mechanics of the ways in which they generated sounds was not openly visible to a listener, and in most cases, even the player, such that not only the sound made was a new experience, but knowing how the sound was made was also a mystery, and sometimes, the players of these instruments would not know what sound they were about to generate prior to a performance. Whilst it would be potentially impractical to recreate this black box approach to instrument building in a regular setting, the notion of generating sounds where the listener has an ambiguous concept of how a sound is being created fuels the sense of the unknown shrouding Futurist sounds becomes even more suitable for Lovecraftian music making.)

5 A CALL TO ACTION!

So I openly call for musicians, composers, performers, and sound artists of all types to fervently engage making new and prominent Lovecraft-influenced music with the inclusion of Futurist mentalities as a means to further embrace the emotions of fear and the unknown that assist in making a piece Lovecraftian! I reach out to musicians who have entertained the idea of making Lovecraft-inspired music and those who already create Mythos-related works on a regular basis to bring this exciting and exceedingly important musical direction to the forefront of the experimental music scene – to bridge a range of genres, in fact: Gothic, dark ambient, improv, harsh noise, witchhouse, modern classical composition, ritual soundscape, and others – and highlight their place amongst the Lovecraftian universe.

There are many ways in which to meet this call: creating sounds that are atypical will be common amongst the composers and performers interested and worthy of participating in realizing the goals of this call to action, but, if possible, a further use of extended techniques on traditional instrumentation (both "Western classical" instruments and various instrumentation incorporated from cultures throughout the world), the construction of new instruments affording new sounds and new playing techniques and compositional possibilities, and the rethinking of intended functionality of common place items whose adjusted use brings new timbres and narrative associations to musical constructs should all be utilized to ensure a Lovecraftian setting of the unknown in sonic productions. A "unified realm of Lovecraftian art bound together by threads of commonalities" as with the puzzle pieces analogy above can be brought about through plural multi-musician collaborations. Non-musical elements can also assist sound artists in attaining this manifesto's ideals, such as consistently titling works with researched and clearly Mythos-related names and using images that tie in directly with Lovecraftian horror when releasing collections of composition or composing supporting videos for tracks.

Furthermore, I call for musicians and sounds artists to seek out inspiration from other contemporary Lovecraftian artisans and engage with them on a creative level. Discover, approach, and collaborate with visual artists (such as Wonder Goblin, Madguten, Andrew Scott, and thousands of

others), active Lovecraftian authors (Pulver, Barrass, Asumatsu, Barron, Gresh, Price, and so, so, so many other important writers, far too numerous to mention here), performance artists (Victoria Snaith and Dread Falls Theatre, for instance), and any other Mythos-inspired creative professionals, including, of course other musical artists.

Some of these artists I hope will continue to embrace the mentalities and sentiments espoused here include Akoustik Timbre Frekuensi, Babalith, Druha Smrt, Hoyland / Plaguewielder, Yog Sothoth and Arcaide, PAS Musique, Mu, raxil4, Haraam, A Demon Sheen, Ambient Fabric, Tamerlan, Hell is Carbon, R'Leyh, Rauppwar, Unquiet Void, Jon Vomit, and Benjamin Pierce and many others. I also hope that several other artists with whom I am less or not familiar will read this manifesto and rise to the occasion and vigorously embrace the musical generation and influential sources discussed within this document. This is more than simply a suggestion for experimental composers and performers to randomly take on a new direction or style, but rather a rally to encourage musicians of a special ilk to carry the torch for unique style that that furthers the sonic experiments commonly taken for granted in our current soundscape, and asks directly, without compromise: join me in embracing this exciting and tantamount realm of darkness, horror, and the supernatural through sonic exploration and engage Lovecraftian works and Mythos-related composition! Become a musical leader of the Eldritch Cult!

Seesar (Dr. William Klugh Connor III)
Honolulu, Hawai'i
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