

# contact

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International Carnival of Experimental  
Sound.

Let's be practical about this. ICES was an enormous jamboree which happened in at least six different places (often several at once) and spread itself over some sixteen days. (Possibly more: who knows whether the after-festival events in the English Channel ever took place?) It was not confined to evenings either: whole days were often crammed with events - and some nights, too, I believe.

It also included about four hundred performers: musicians of a number of different kinds, dancers, actors, film projectionists, tape operators, environmental artists (this is a useful term to describe those who don't fit into any of the above categories and yet don't sell ice-cream either) and an actor-ventriloquist who appeared uninvited on several nights and who may in the end have made the most serious comment of all.

At this distance, and in this space, it is neither possible nor desirable to give any detailed criticism of individual performances. Like most people, I had to be very selective. I went to five evenings at the Roundhouse and three theatre - dance presentations.

I seem, from what I have gathered of other performances, to have picked a number of bad nights. This was a pity - but I can only suppose that a number of other people must have had a similar experience. And with such a vast quantity of events taking place in such a short time, it is inevitable that the quality will be variable.

There was the disastrous Friday, August 18th at the Roundhouse, for instance. Stein Kwartet from Holland ended by turning out Communist propoganda which detracted considerably from their otherwise interesting musical performance. California Time Machine did not live up to expectations. In fact, apart from their opening piece for three wine-drinkers, they gave a very poor showing - additionally spoilt by the Roundhouse bogey I have already mentioned, who, together with girl, paraded around in (Edwardian?) costume for half an hour until the audience realised that he wasn't part of the performance and had him forcibly removed.

The other entertainments promised for that evening - including "girl on a rope" - did not materialise. The girl couldn't find her rope or something..... The very fine and deservedly popular

Ghanaian drummers came to the rescue and delighted the audience with their exuberance, vitality and sheer joy in making music that seemed to make the evening worthwhile. They had already appeared on the second night of the festival, following a fine performance by the Gentle Five.

The anonymous intruder turned up again the following Monday. (By the way, I daresay I'm helping him to think he achieved his aim by talking about him so much. While his intentions were no doubt suitably dishonourable, he became a crashing bore very swiftly: this is my main objection to him). Monday night saw the non-appearance of Intermodulation - anyway, everyone was on the musictrain to Edinburgh, weren't they?

There was fortunately another English group called C.I.M. who, though they played too long in a gallant attempt to fill the gap left by Smalley and Co., showed a very high standard of group improvisation and, like Music Plus on the following Thursday, gave a most musically satisfying performance. The tape of this should be bought (from Harvey Matusow) by all improvisation groups as a model of how these things should be. And, by the way, the high standard of English groups that I heard made a telling contrast with the frequently low standard of foreign ones. We're not so backward in this country as we're sometimes led to believe.

Music Plus also joined Roy Hart Theatre at St. Pancras Church on the last (official) day of ICES. The Theatre's performance of And was one of the most moving and frightening experiences I have ever had in the theatre.

Very different - but highly enjoyable - was the Red Buddha Theatre Company at Nash House. Very much Yamash'ta's evening, with music (rock and Japanese-folk influenced) composed by him and played by his English rock group, Come to the Edge.

I was disappointed by the low standard of some groups. A lot of bad improvisation, in particular; the worst I heard was a hideous so-called mixing of east and west by the Belgian-Japanese group, Transition.

I was annoyed by the attitude of the Roundhouse Staff, who were generally off-hand and wouldn't allow anyone (except those with passes for the whole festival) into the hall until the performances had started. Some of them did have beginnings, middles and ends - contrary to general opinion. I was also annoyed by a certain lack of organization

in general: that so many good groups - Intermodulation, Musica Electronica Viva - didn't turn up and that the whole programme of Bank Holiday weekend outdoor activities had to be cancelled because the G.L.C. wouldn't grant permission to use either Hyde Park or Parliament Hill Fields.

Some of this must have been less fun for the organisers than it was for the audience. And don't get me wrong, I'm very glad ICES took place - if not all in the spirit in which it was intended. The aims, justifications and all the moral issues (yes, I do mean moral) that people always seem to want discussed whenever avant-garde music flaunts itself publicly in this manner will have to wait for another time, though. But I do sometimes get the feeling: why don't we just go out and get on with it? I'm glad that, despite some of the polemics which surrounded it, ICES did try to do just that.

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