

J: So what did you end up choosing.

E: For the good piece I chose Weather Report Black Market.

J: And for the the bad piece ?

E: And for the the bad piece I chose the Ligeti Piano Concerto.

J: (Laughs) Good. This has resonance you understand.

E: Yeah, well that's part of it, you know. There is no neutral choice. It's absolutely impossible to make those statements. Based on these pieces as pure musical objects.

J: And will you feel this way a week from now?

E: Oh sure, because I've felt this way about both these pieces for a long time now.

J: The Ligeti? I remember your being completely enthused about the Ligeti about a year ago.

E: No it couldn't have been a year ago. It must have been when I first came across it which is part of the reason why I now think it is a bad piece. I mean, its a trickster of a piece in that its whole agenda is really bogus in a really devious in harmful way. Compared to say, music that is really awful to listen and think about like Ferneyhough or Carter or that stuff, why bother with it. It so clearly doesn't have anything to do with anything that I'm interested in . . .

J: Sort of like Pat Buchanan. (Why even bother listening.) You can just write it off.

E: Right. Well at least Pat Buchanan is in favor of peasants with pitchforks.

J: OK. We'll what about the Black Market. Is it the whole record you're endorsing, or just a tune from it.

E: I could pick one tune, but I think of the whole thing as a piece even though there's three or four composers and its really a collaborative effort.

J: You know what we should do, we should listen to it. I haven't listened to it in ages.

E: Now you see what I mean about the Ligeti (in comparison). Like, with Ferneyhough, there's no point in railing against it which is like railing against the Janos Kadar regime. It's so historically insignificant. Its just this weird thing that happened at this point in time that will never be thought of again that has no coherence. It doesn't make a coherent argument for itself.

J: Yeah but to get back to the Ligeti, is the problem that you think that if it is not responded to now and with vehemence it has the danger of breathing artificial life into a tradition which would be better off not continuing.

E: Well yeah, but that's not really what I was thinking. My objection is much more specific.

J: It seems your objection is moral.

E: I haven't made my objection yet, John.

J: Well, no but . . .

E: My basic objection is that it sounds like crap but since you could say that its based on African music and seems to be influenced by this, that or the other cool thing, you can easily miss the fact that its a totally obvious and traditional structure for a piece with a bunch of ugly modernist crap livened up with little passing, knowing nods to two weeks worth of thinking about African music.

J; Uh huh.

E: And its so offensive in that way in that it takes this amazing music and totally exploits it, far worse than Stockhausen did with Telemusik. At least Stockhausen transforms and buries things and it least thinking about the structure of Noh or Kabuki and is thinking about sound, whereas all Ligeti is doing is saying "you see these really interesting repetitive things. Let's make them non-repetitive and add a bunch of banging, and not even good banging. " And [even though its supposedly based on African music] it has no groove and destroys every groove it sets up because it doesn't know how to sustain a groove under the guise of "you know, this is not about a groove." And then, the structure of it is based on totally simplistic ideas about pitch (and dissonance.) it raises a pitch or it lowers a pitch and when it gets exciting it adds more pitches. But if I really want to listen to music which knows how to use pitch like that, I'll listen to Xenakis. He knows how to do clusters or Cecil Taylor. He knows how to bang on a piano. Not his half-assed crap which sounds like Bartok except the notes suck.

J: Yeah. But I'm not sure if you buy all that.

E: I totally buy that. Listen to these sections where all these large gestural things happen with descending figures in canon and ask yourself "why these notes?" Because they sound bad. That's the only reason. I mean, there's no essentialness to it at all.

J; OK. So what does that mean. "There's no essentialness to it.

E: Listen to the Weather Report. I mean here's something that's really perfect in a certain sense, and not just because you've listened to it a million times. And not because its tonal, or anything, because you can think of examples of music (that's perfect in the same way) that's not tonal. Its that you feel that the musicians believe in every note and believe in the necessity for every note.

J: But that's so subjective. I mean I can imagine somebody saying that he or she loves the Ligeti because its so clear he believes in every note. What I would like to do with you is to get beyond the usual sorts of more or less disguised subjectivity.

E: But these kinds of things are always subjective, what are we talking about here and that is the intellectual justification. I mean, ultimately, there's really no more to say than the piece either excites you or puts you in a bad mood.

J: But that's hardly an "essentialist" criticism of the Ligeti if all you 'redoing is challenging the guy's sincerity.

E: OK. Let's put it this way. Yes, certainly its subjective, but it has to do with a subjective sense of essentialness. The reason I think I object to the Ligeti so strongly is that I can see myself coming up with something like that really easily. Or me at age twenty two when I still wanted to write "modern" music and even if I did that, I still wouldn't be satisfied with that piece. I would look at certain sections and think, "this is just like throwing paint against the canvas."

J: OK. What's modern about the Ligeti?

E: Its ugly.

J: But Michael Gordon is ugly and he's not modern.

E: No. Michael's music isn't ugly

J: Sure. Its dissonant and unrelenting.

E: That's not ugly.

J: But he call's it ugly.

E: But that's just a kind of self effacing thing when people in that category call their music ugly.. You don't really want it to be ugly. You want it to be cool which requires some grit. Not to compare it to the blues, but the blues has grit.

J: And Ligeti doesn't have grit?

E: No, Ligeti is effete. If Ligeti had grit, he could handel wrong notes and he can't.

J; When you say "handel" you mean he doesn't have control over them>

E: No. I mean if you played Ligeti and you played some wrong notes, he'd be pissed off whereas if you played Ives, or Michael Gordon or Monk with wrong notes but captured the essential nature of the piece they wouldn't mind.

J: I don't know about that. You think that's true with Ligeti?

E: No.

J: You don't feel that he senses that the piece has an essential nature independent of the exact pitches and rhythms. I mean, forget about Ligeti for a second, imagine a composer who you don't

like who has a strong idea about what the expressive character of his music is?

E: Yeah sure. I can imagine that.

J: But you don't think that its true in his case?

E: No. Because he fusses too much and the scores are too intricate in ways that seem to indicate to me that he wants it played "right".

J: OK. But I still don't think that that is quite getting at the bankruptcy that you sense behind Ligeti.

E: Well, because I feel that the piece is straddling a whole bunch of lines in a way that's making it seem like its some post-modern, multi-cultural "answer", [based on the assumption that] there's still room for a genius.

J: Is there still room for a genius?

E: I think so. In fact, I think more so than ever. Its just that the nature of the cultural machine is a lot different now. [Cross cultural stuff on "genius"]

J: So for example.

E: What I'm saying is that I think its possible for a single musician to make music which can effect a lot of people in a really profound way which is sort of one of the criteria for status as a genius, I guess. Or change the way that people think about music.

J: There you go.

E: But I don't think Ligeti is doing that. I think he rides waves. I should say that I don't mean to come down on him as a person. He's a really nice guy. He's always been nice to me. He's come to my concerts, he bought me a drink, we talked about balinese music. I think he's really sincere, and I think he believes in what he's doing.

J: Yeah, but you just said that he's not sincere and that he doesn't really believe in what he writes.

E: No, I think its a deeper thing.

J: You mean that he doesn't know what it means to be sincere, to believe in what you're doing.

E: Look, this a completely subjective thing, [but is has to with this.] There's a standard that I hold myself to when I'm writing and maybe its totally bogus and my own music doesn't live up to it either, but in my mind I keep at it until its exactly the way I want it to be, and its doesn't have anything to do with wrong or right pitches, although it can and alot of times it does. But what I mean is that you have to go with that personal sense that the person is in it as deeply as I would be.

J: So is it your sense that the music breaks down locally? What your saying is that you keep at your music until it says what you want it say. . .

E: Actually that's a mistatement. I would say that I keep at it until the music says what I think it wants to say

J: OK, but what that means to me is that you hack away at what you've got by dropping the stuff that doesn't have the bite, or whatever.

E: Yeah.

J: But that seems to me a different thing than the conception of a piece. If a piece is fundamentally misconceived, no amount of local drudge work, by you me or Ligeti is going to save it. Of course, that begs the question, can a piece be fundamentally misconceived?

E: I'm not sure if there is such a thing. Since a conception is just a framework of something that doesn't exist yet.

J: Right, but you just described the conception behind the piano concerto as problematic [in its relation to african music, its overt reliance on traditional model etc.]

E: Right but there's two sorts of conception we're talking about here.

There's a philosophical and theoretical conception, and then there's the actual structure of the piece which is one of the categories in the philosophical theoretical conception.

J: Or could be completely independent.

E: Yeah but you have to make choices about what kind of structures you're interested in, or whether you're interested in structure at all or how conscious you want to be in structure.

J: And you think that that is problematic in Ligeti's case?

E: Well no, but I think that there is no center to the music because there is always a weird dodge involved with structure. So on the one hand you can say that the structure is really clear and simple and it's really elemental and so is the overall direction of the piece. And that was the big thing with the kind of music he began making in the late sixties, so like in the Kammerkonzert where all of a sudden you actually know what's going on, where you can actually make sense of rhythmic or tonal relationships which you can hear.

J: As opposed to most of the Darmstadt stuff which preceded it where you can't hear anything at all.

E: Yeah, and that's not stuff he ever did since he was writing kind of atmosphere like pieces which were single minded in a pretty clear way. But when he started to be interested in pieces which had contrasting [elements] that was such a breath of fresh air in that world. So when you hear the Kammerkonzert you say, "wow that arrives at an octave, check that out." But [what got forgotten is] that that should be the bare minimum for what I want from a piece

that I know what's going on as opposed to just thanking God that somebody's writing something that I can start to make sense of.

J: So you want a highly evolved, subjectively perceivable structure.

E: Well maybe, but that's not the focus of what I'm saying. What I want to say is that just because you have one, doesn't mean you have a good one.

J: Or just because you have one doesn't mean that the piece will convey anything.

E: Well certainly that.

J: So its a necessary condition but not sufficient.

E: Yeah, but then there's music I like that doesn't have that.

J: Then its not a necessary condition.

E: That's what I'm saying. If you are interested in making that an issue in your music, then its a necessary condition.

J: Really. Can you imagine, for example, a piece which tries to build up some structure but fails miserably in doing so, but still succeeds in some sense.

E: I would go back to C.P.E. Bach for that whose music was all about taking you in a certain direction and then saying "Na, that's not where I wanted to go. Let's go somewhere else."

J: Yeah but that's part of the plan.

E: Of course, I was interested in that sort of thing myself when I was writing these pieces in the early eighties which were all about having certain kinds of incongruities being built into them. But I'm not really sure if I stand by those pieces now. Some of them I do, and some of them I don't. Some of them I just want to cut large sections out of; I think, I'm just crapping around here to be weird.

J: But, if you cut out those sections, you're not being true to the conception of the piece.

E: Why?

J: Because the piece is all about encompassing incongruities.

E: Well then the piece encompasses a few less incongruities.

J: OK.

E: But for me, for my own music, the conception of the piece often changes as I'm working on the piece. I have an initial idea that helps me trigger some specific musical [response] and they maybe bad realization of what i thought the original ideas was. But then I think, what are these things if not the original idea, and then I'll build a piece form there.

J: This raises the question of what technique is about in this contact. Since you usually think of technique in terms of having the ability to realize your initial idea. Maybe, to bring you back to

Ligeti, you can say whether what's unsatisfying to you is a failure of technique in some sense.

E: Well it seems to me there's a semantic distinction here. Because the guy obviously "has chops" in that he can write sophisticated rhythms, and can orchestrate, blah blah. Or more generally, he can get his ideas across.

J: But not to you.

E: He does it just that I don't think there great ideas. That's the point. There's a certain technique which has to do with convincing someone in the internal necessity of the music. That's about the most careful, armored way I can make the statement. Of course, there's room for really open improvisation where you can say, if this guy played an hour later it would have been different and you can do that both within a language or outside of it. Like, Monk could do that. Or certain free improvisors could do that. But within a piece that's a piece, that you're meant to listen to over and over again . . .

J: But improvisations can have that quality too, can't they?

E: They certainly do-you can listen to them over and over and each time they seem perfect and both of us probably have more of those things stuck in our head than we probably should. Freddy Hubbard solos, for example.

J: That brings up something. Do you wish they weren't?

E: No. Not really, well maybe some of the TV commercials.

J: So is a lot of the music that have in our head's shit [And does it matter]?

E: No. If I like it and it really holds up over time, it can't be shit. I can't think of anything I like which I would call shit. I mean, I just bought a Jethro Tull tape.[stuff on shit deleted] With pretty much everything from [canonized] classical works to Pink Floyd to Abba songs, you can go through all sorts of cycles where they seem interesting or uninteresting, shit or non shit. Part of that is the completely subjective nature of the listening experience which is compounded now by this memory device of the recording which has really transformed the whole notion of performance in an important way. You can focus on the things which are exactly the same from performance to performance in a way that you can't with music you are experiencing live even if it's the same piece. I think that's why the whole fetishization of the score seems so ridiculous to you or me, certainly to me, still holds true because there was a time when the score was the only essence of the piece you had. Whereas now for me, I don't really think of my pieces as having an existence in terms of live performance. I like it when they do, but I think of my pieces as existing for recording purposes.

J: To get back to the pieces you chose, the one you don't like is notated, the one you don't is notated. Is there a future for notation?

E: Yeah, but I think its got to go through some kind of transformation because there's a limit. I think one of the things which jazz and rock really did to western ears, because no Indian musician would ever think that notation captured the essence of anything, is to show that there's something about the life of a melody which you can't capture on the page. No matter how accurate a transcription of Coltrane is there's something that's above and beyond the notation. And performers all know this anyway. When I wasn't a performed I used to think that that was just a pathetic way which performers justify their existence because all that really mattered was the score. But now I think I think that something happens when music actually becomes music, or music actually becomes sound. I think there are ways that scores can be . . . I mean, the Darmstadt gang understood this but of course their answer was only to make things worse. Which was to say that we don't have enough specificity in terms of color and dynamics and we have to devise a notation which covers everything. But what their really saying is what I'm saying which is theirs alot more to music than pitch and duration and some approximate notion of volume. But what they weren't dealing with is [the extent to which] performers will take care of all that. In terms of a composer wanting to have more control, for example, why couldn't a score include a tape which indicated exactly the way I wanted the melody played. Or all sorts of ways of indicating that rather than limiting it to a two dimensional visual domain.

J: Or why can't a score be a midi file. Is that going to happen?

E: Isn't it already happening?

J: I don't know. Certainly an increasingly larger fraction of the music which people listen to is non-notated, and probably also an increasingly larger fraction of music which people "take seriously" is also non-notated.

E: Yeah, well part of that is, again, that recordings can serve the function of [the score.] Obviously Black Market is conceived of as a single entity and so are hip-hop records or techno records. I'm thinking specifically of this Tribe Called Quest record I'm really into now Midnight Marauders. I don't know what people do with it, but there's all sorts of reasons why its got to be in the order its in. That's thanks to Frank Zappa and Paul McCartney. They were the ones who decided that an album could be like a piece.

J: But do you feel that's a retrograde tendency in the sense that its capitulating to traditional standards of what should or shouldn't make a piece? Isn't that a reactionary idea, in fact?

E: Bullshit. The whole mobile forms idea was being done by Earle Brown in 1953. That's forty years ago the idea of piece being shuffled out of parts, there's nothing new about that.

J: But what I mean is that the idea of organic form, where there is an ideal location for all of the significant events is an idea which goes back four hundred years and was an obsession with a comparatively limited tradition.

E: Limited or archetypal. I mean that criticism is like saying "you just read these novels where the story makes sense. That's so old fashioned. People have been doing that since Homer or since Gilgamesh. Why not read Robbe-Grillet. Now I enjoy Robbe-Grillet. But the fact of the matter is that you [usually] want stories which make sense.

J: OK. Well you're now issuing an indictment of the modernist program, I think. Are you?

E: Yeah. Who cares about Finnegans Wake at this point. Who reads those Cage things where its just words on the page. Who reads automatic writing. Students in classes on surrealism read Andre Breton.

J: But of course, Cage perceive himself as being a reaction to a particular trend in modernism by replacing hypercontrol by non-control. Have we learned that that is a invidious distinction?

E: All we've really learned is that those things sound the same--that there are two ways to get very similar results.

J: So, what's the result?

E: Well, randomness.

J: From whose standpoint?

E: From mine.

J: From yours or from anybody's?

E: I suppose that there's a chance that the lovers of Structures really love the piece with a passion and hang on every note of that piece. I suppose that's possible.

J: Do you really suppose that's possible?

E: Yeah, I suppose its possible, I'm mean, why not, what am I omniscient, I don't know everything.

J: You have some idea about a lot of things. For example, if someone blows a dog whistle, you know no one is hearing the pitches.

E: But look, there are scientific papers which I don't read, I'm not making this analogous-only in the sense that there are things in the

world that I don't understand, and I can't say about them that they're pointless.

J: But are you going to put Structures in that category?

E: I personally would not put Structures in that category, but I'm not ruling out the possibility that someone could genuinely love that piece. I'm also not ruling out the possibility that you could "hear the relationships." Actually, I am ruling out that possibility.

J: Yes, I think you are.

E: Because if you think about it logically [if you have overlapping serial structures it's inherently impossible to hear them as serial structures. You hear things that happen with other things that happen locally . . . [not in relation to pitches which occurred two minutes or two hours ago.] But [that's not to deny] that there might be people who might love these pieces as sonic objects and that the pieces might speak to them in some way. I'm not ruling that out.

J: That raises the question of to what degree the listening process is a kind of Rorschach test where you can project any structure you want on what you hear.

E: To a large degree. That's the real lesson of Cage. That's the real lesson of 4'33'. A guy like Steve Shick, a guy whom I respect as a musician in the way that I understand the word loves the Ferneyhough piece that he plays. But that has to do with a value system which [involves] a respect for precision and virtuosity for its own sake and a mental [and physical] relationship to the music which Ferneyhough allows him to have, which he has in his mind which he then overlays on the music, and no doubt I do the same thing in all sorts of other ways which I feel to the depth of my bone marrow.

J: But [this all has to do with your relationship to and your communication with the music you're playing.] Don't you feel that as a performer at least, you have some relationship with the listener rather than just communing with the music you're playing?

E: Yes. My definition of a meaningful musical act is when there is some simple and fundamental relationship between the kind of mental work that I'm doing in playing the piece [and] with the kind of work a composer was doing in writing the piece and what the listener is doing when they listen to it. The simplest way to think about that is in terms of meter. If you're counting like crazy and to the listener it doesn't sound like there's any meter at all I think that by its definition that's grounds for meaninglessness because how can you be in the same mental universe. And people know that this is a problem. So in a piece like the second movement of Webern's Piano Variations, for example, David Lewin wrote a

whole paper on why it had to be notated in 2/4 when it sounds like its in 3/8. I remeber talking with and old friend George Thompson about the piece who said that he thought it was really a piece that relies on you seeing the performance, and that [the relationship between what you're seeing and what you're hearing] becomes a polyrhythm. Of course, we all know that when we do that when we see modern orchestral pieces where we see that conductor beating which almost makes it seem as if there's a drum track going on, and then you try to listen to that music without it, and its like, forget it. That's why I have a lot more respect for music which is not in time that doesn't force the player to count like a maniac. Because it seems like theres a fundamental contradiction when someone tries to write something which precisely sounds like it is imprecise. It seems like there's got to be a better way of doing that so that the imprecision pervades the whole structure of the enterprise. On the other, I also think that creative misunderstanding is what fuels the whole operation. In other words, I feel like the kind of mind meld which I'm talking about is kind of like the upper limit of the function which you can never reach and if you reached it actually everything would come crashing down.

J: Of course, for there to be misunderstanding there has to be some level of understanding.

E: Right, but you see it cross culturally when things become crazes for reasons which have nothing to do with what they were intended for or for what they are.

J: This brings up the whole question of to what degree one appreciate ethnic musics, or if one really does at all. Does one?

E: Yeah, that's a problem. Certainly, one does, but I'm less and less sure if that has anything to do with the ethnic music at all.

J: But we began this discussion with Ligeti and one of the indictments which you levelled at the Piano Concerto was that it relied a very half-baked understanding of African music. [What it seems you're saying now is that you can never really go beyond that.]

E: I should say thought that Ligeti could really dig African music in its own right and he could have a really clear sense that he's just using it as raw material in a way that has nothing to do with African music. He may be very aware of that.

J: In which case, does the indictment still stand?

E: Yeah sure because that's even more of a dodge.

J: But you just said the whole question of your level of "understading" of western music is always going to be problematic.

E: (pauses) [My friend the ethnomusicologist] George Ruckert tells this story where Nasruddin (the folklorist) is looking for his keys by a lamppost and a guy goes by and says why are you looking for them there. You lost them over there in the woods. And Nasruddin answers, because that's where the light is. Now I've been doing Balinese music my whole life and I've composed pieces and they've been played in Bali and it occurred to me the other day that I don't have the faintest idea of what these melodies are all about.

J: But what do you mean by about? For example, I think you can assume that the meter which you internalize has probably even a closer relationship to the one which they have in their heads than, say, the 2/4 which Webern writes as compared to the 3/8 which you feel.

E: What's interesting is that I'm faking it and I'm getting away with it. And maybe I'm getting away with it because maybe everybody's faking it. [By the same token,] what the hell do I know about Western music. You just hear the stuff and nobody ever explains the stuff to you.

J: Sure but certain pieces speak to you in a deeper way than others. Do you agree with me that that is not a totally meaningless statement.

E: Yes, but I don't think that you can logically argue it.

J: But that doesn't deny the reality of the experience. In the same way, I can't prove to you that a sentence is ungrammatical. But I know that it is.

E: That's true with ethnic music true, of course. But a lot of times you find that what speaks to you, [how something speaks to you] is of a very different from how it speaks to its indigenous practitioners, and what they get out of it, or what they experience from it. And as long as you accept that, and as long as you are willing for that to be in a constant state of revision, as you're getting to know a music, and as you're engaging it and disengaging from it, you're fine.

J: What do you mean by you're fine? It's hard to know what sense you mean that. Do you mean that it's not contributing to your growth as a musician?

E: Yeah. I think that's a viable way of putting it. Or you're engaging the world on an honest level.

J: So honesty is good?

E: Honesty in the sense of not wanting to live in a state of constant self-delusion. Wanting your feeling to have some relation to objective reality.

J: So self-delusions are bad?

E: For me personally, if you think of life as being some kind of quest towards self-realization or discovery, that seems to have something to do with your relationship to the external world, to having some relationship with the world as it really is.

J: OK. Let's get back to Ligeti. Does what you're saying have anything to do with why you find the Piano Concerto objectionable?

E: Sure. Because who needs it? What does it add to anything? It adds nothing except to the glorification of Ligeti. It doesn't teach you anything about African music, it doesn't teach you anything about Western music . . .

J: But that's so pedantic. Are pieces supposed to teach you things?

E: OK. You're right to catch me on the word "teach." But I don't mean teach in the pedantic sense, I mean it in the sense of life-lessons in the sense of feeling more enlightened.

J: I'm still not convinced that that's a valid criticism. To turn to the positive case, I would never occur to me to say about pieces which I stand behind that they teach me anything in particular.

E: See, I think I learned a lot from the tune Black Market. I certainly learned about music.

J: But you mean something more than that. You mean that you learn things about the world from good pieces.

E: But why do you do music. Music is some deeply metaphorical way of engaging with the world.

J: So to get back to Black Market, what is it doing so that it has something more to say than something which is just about music?

E: Well, I guess I should start then by listing the specific things which I like about it.

J: Well no, I think we're talking about the general statement you think the music makes.

E: The thing I like about it is that it doesn't reduce itself to any easily articulated general statement other than its really cool. It doesn't start from some central premise which I'm going to state in the course of the piece which is a what a lot of Western music and a lot of music by my close friends is all about.

J: Some of them say that that's what make their pieces go, but I'm not sure if all of them really compose in that way.

E: Right. But that's what I like about Weather Report. Those guys don't even say it.

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J: Why do you think that's an obsession among our circles?

E: Its an obsession because the synopsis is the key to the market.

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I don't mind that, what I mind is when that actually infects the piece of music itself.

J: I know this is going to bug you but I need a specific piece.

E: I really don't want to but any number of minimalist pieces.

J: Well not really, because every minimalist is really about the same idea in your terms. For example, every minimalist piece could be called expansions. I suppose that exhibit A of who you're talking about is David (Lang) but with him I don't think that its right to say that the idea infects the piece. It seems to me that his compositional technique gives him [the flexibility to act on really abstract ideas which for most composer wouldn't seem to be ideas which could generate music.]

E: For me the pieces of David's which work for me are the ones which really break through. For example, Press Release, which goes all sorts of places which you wouldn't expect it to go to based on the initial premise. It has several contrasting sections and develops and things effect each other and things happen and come back later on. Same thing about Anvil Chorus, and that's why these are his two best pieces. Harold Pinter said somewhere that all he does when he writes is listen to his characters. I try to do the same thing when I'm writing music. Its a fiction, obviously, since its all coming from your brain, but what its about is listening to what you've come up with and seeing how you can make it clearer. Clearer not necessarily in the sense of simpler, but how you can bring out what you find interesting about the thing you've come up with.

J: But what's the thing you've come up with?

E: The thing you've come up with is just some sonic object. What it amounts to is a process of excavation where you discover a rhythm or a cool turn of phrase or there's a feeling to it, or whatever. And you may not be even saying these things to yourself. You're just hacking away at it and then it turns into to something. Sometimes you can figure it out consciosly what it is or other times it just gets stuck in your head and that could again, just be part of the process of listenening to the piece over and over again. In any case, you're responding to the thing which you've come up with.

J: So you're articulating what you're objecting to in pieces which are working out an initial premise.

E: Yes.

J: But what you are describing might be construed as working out an initial premise.

E: No, not exactly. I'm describing an overall working method as opposed to the working out of an initial premise say in the case of Stockhausen's Mixtures where you're just oppressed by this idea

which is what the piece is supposed to be about: these stark contrasts based on these serial formations, etc.

J: Your making a distinction, then, between the idea which the piece is supposed to be based on and the actual material which sets a piece in motion.

E: Yeah. But sometimes the two things are one and the same. Say in the case of Reich where there is no difference between the verbal idea-this piece is about X- and the actual musical idea itself.

J: So then why are the tunes so good?

E: That's because it's one and the same thing. It's about finding the ramifications of this tune. But it's not just an arbitrarily picked tune. He's probably gone through fifty permutations of it before deciding that this is the one that's fertile enough that when it's subjected to the same transformations he had . . .

J: right, in every piece for the last twenty five years.

E: it can reveal new aspects about itself. You just can't pick any melody and [hope that it will work.] A lot of student composers try. I've certainly tried. So what we were talking about. OK. I don't like music where the primary thing on my mind is something other than the music. So, the piece which I almost picked as the piece [I wanted to stand by] was Arnold Dreiblat's Animal Magnetism. One of the reasons why I thought it was incredible was that I thought it was incredible before I understood how it worked. Even though it's highly intellectual music in the sense that it's based on this synthetic, though he would say totally organic intonational system, [ ] to me the music worked in a way I want music to work before I understood those issues at all.

J: Yeah, but I think you have a stricter requirement. Whatever you want to say about it, the Ligeti Piano Concerto, in some sense, really "works as music" doesn't it?

E: That's what I'm saying. It doesn't. It really doesn't. You listen to that piece and it is lame. And not only that, it just peters out . . .

J: I think you would still dislike that piece even if it wasn't lame, and even if it "worked" musically, whatever that means for you.

E: See I don't think so, because when I first encountered that piece I was really excited about it. All I listen to for inspiration is non-western music so of course when somebody comes along and uses twelve eighth rhythms, I'm going to be really excited by it.

J: But your objection to it was that it was just dabbling.

E: When I first listened to it, I thought it was more than just dabbling. What made me decide it was dabbling was that as I listened to it repeatedly, I liked it less and less--the more and more I listened to it, it seemed lamer and lamer. Whereas with Black

Market the first time I heard it I thought nothing was going on. What is this, this stupid little pentatonic tune in four-four big deal. What the hell. And then, every time I listened to it, it sounded better and better. And then I listened to it for five years, and then I put it on my shelf and moved half-way around the world and didn't listen to it for a decade. Then I picked it up again two months ago and it literally sounded just as good as it had back then. That kind of resonance, I can't explain it, it just that it seemed like that there were more things to listen to. The things I liked were still there, but I was hearing more things and not just things I could discuss, but things that, as they went by, just gave me pleasure, or immediate insight or pseudo-insight or whatever and just made me feel more engaged with the world.

J: But you were saying this in the context of a purely formal explanation for why you think Black Market is more satisfying than the Ligeti. So you must mean that you are responding to these aspects of Black Market on a purely formal level.

E: Only if that merges completely with a completely visceral level. What I'm saying is that I want those things to be one and the same. There is something to be gained from analysing music outside of the listening experience but ultimately the crucible is the listening experience. If I study Arnold Dreiblat's tuning system and then I listen to the music and it's less interesting than that's a problem. But if I study the music and then I [realize] that in addition to the things I already liked about it there are also all these things which I wasn't hearing and that can be its own level of understanding and its own level of message passing. That to me is a mark. So it has to do with whether you can layer resonances to things or not. And the resonances can come from all sorts of directions but you can't lose it. [All that applies] to Black Market in the same way. [When I listen to it, the last thing I'm thinking about is] how technically hard it was to put [the piece] together back in the seventies. [And I don't have to make excuses for it being] essentially simplistic music which doesn't hold my interest--the grooves don't stand up compared to souped up nineties grooves we have now etc. [Incidentally], that sometimes happens with Herbie Hancock's old music. So, I went out and got Manchild after you played it for me, and I remembered how much I loved it. But compare Manchild with Dis is da Drum and Dis is da Drum just sounds a whole lot better. Or compare Dis is da Drum to Rockit, which I liked a lot when it first came out, Rockit doesn't really hold up either anymore. [Herbie Hancock's music] seems to have half lives.

J: I'm not sure if all of his music is like that. [] I think some of this has to do with his process of putting his music together. What makes for a lot of the interest of Manchild is the drummer Mike Clark, thrashing away like a lunatic. And I think the same thing is happening with Black Market, where a lot of the interest is the the drummer Alex Acuna banging on everthing in sight and then Zawinul sitting at the mixing board and turning down the channel when it stops being interesting. Of course, the new stuff doesn't work like that. MIDI music like Dis is da Drum has a lot more to do with creating sequences on synths and drum machines and samplers and I think maybe that way of working suits Hancock better.

E: I think its hard to say how these guys work. [Its not as if with midi these guys are totally divorced from a physical relationship with the material]. Most of what makes Dis is da Drum so great is his piano playing which there's a lot of. In a certain sense he's just setting up vehicles for his improvisations which are really amazing and if you took out the improvisations, it wouldn't be half as interesting. But I'm perfectly prepared for my infatuation with Dis is da Drum to wear out too.

J: But not your infatuation with Black Market?

E: Well, its time tested now. We're going on twenty years. Over twenty years. That's a pretty good run even if it does wear out.

J: I want to return to a question I had before. Can you imagine a piece which you liked twenty years ago, but which you wouldn't want to make any claim for its musical quality.

E: I wouldn't be so extreme but I would say that there are certain pieces which you need for your own reasons as corrective to your own. . . [impulses]. [] There are pieces which serve a function in your own development as a musician, as a composer, or maybe as a person.

J: Sure. Pieces which had tremendous resonance for you [or me] for God knows what reason. But can you distinguish between those pieces and those which you feel you really want to stand behind?

E: I'm hard pressed to think of many examples. OK. I'll give you an example. Thad Jones-Mel Lewis I don't really find that interesting any more, but at a certain point when I was a teenager was really important to me and I still understand why it was important to me.

J: I'm surprised that that's what you pick out, because there's a lot of stuff in that music you can point to, and people do, [as having a whole lot of inherent interest.] For example, the way he scores lines for the saxophone section. Or will go into a half time section at a really odd moment within the form or a tune.

E: Right. There's a whole lot of lessons there. But do you really want to hear, say, those records.

J: Some of them maybe. I would certainly rather listen to them above say, [a whole lot of the jazz that's out there now which seems incredibly sterile to me.]

E: Let me make clear what I'm saying. There's a certain point at which the things you are learning from it, for example, that saxophone sound, the ability to [incorporate so smoothly] these dissonant melodies and harmonies within the form, makes you forgive a lot of stuff in the music that is not so interesting. For example, these trite little lyrical sections in the Central Park North Suite, or the quasi rock grooves that were important because they showed that jazz bands could play quasi rock grooves, but when you listen to them now and all you can think is, those are pretty lame grooves. The aura of the stuff you liked pervaded the whole piece enough back then so that you could get through the whole piece, but now [it doesn't work.]

J: To digress, a little, I thought for your "bad" record you were going to choose the Bob Dorough thing you once played me.

E: That's too easy a target. And plus, I was always fascinated by that record.

J: That brings up the question, can a piece be so bad that it's good?

E: Yeah, well the thing that makes that record so fascinating is that every decision that is made is wrong. So, for example, the trumpet player will start to play a descending chromatic line and he'll just keep going for no reason. And there are so many examples like that that it becomes an inversion of quality.

J: Right. And not just on a technical level either.

E: So it had a kind of perfection to it. [As Tolstoy said,] every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. [So that means that every bad tune is absolutely unique.] Take for another example, the Shags.

J: So are the Shags great? As a comparison, I remember I once brought you "The Kids from Widney High" and you were totally offended.

E: See the difference is that with the Shags, you can laugh at them thinking that they're totally incompetent, but they're really not incompetent at all in some sense, which doesn't mean that their competence is conscious or that they're aware that they're phasing or that they're playing thirteen against twelve. But they like what they're doing.

J: How do you know they like what they're doing?

E: I should say that I'm convinced that they like what they're doing and that there's something conscious there, and I don't mean conscious in the sense of a numerical knowledge of the relationships.

[]The reason I like to use the Shags as an example the given being that I like the music and I find it interesting in its own right, is that someone will show you something like "A Mirror on which to Dwell" and [describe some sort of arcane relationships which are embodied in the structure of the piece.] And that would be their stated reason for why the piece was "interesting." OK. Well here's the Shags. There's just as much "interesting" stuff going on. So what's the problem? What is the premise by which the Shags are shit and Elliott Carter genius? Because he could write down forty three against forty two? Who can't? Anybody could. Of course, pity the players who have to pretend that they can play it, but that's not his problem.

J: But, at least in Carter's case, the stuff that he writes is at least performable, and that's what a lot of people find impressive about it.

E: Its just hideous.

J: Right. But that's what you find objectionable about it.

E: But that's always what I object to.

J: The Shags are not hideous?

E: I love the Shags.

J: Could you love them and find them hideous?

E: Not really. Not in a larger sense of the word hideous or the word beauty. As I was saying earlier, we use those terms, ugly and beautiful in a way the refers to notions of ugliness and beauty that we really don't believe in.

J: What notions specifically?

E: Notions having to do with quality of sound, for example. Classical ideas of what "good" sound production is, or what rhythmic relationships should be, or of a certain level of simplicity or clarity. And we really don't want that in our music.

J: What do you mean by "a certain level of simplicity or clarity?"

E: Take Arvo Part, on one extreme, and Cecil Taylor on the other. One is beautiful, the other is ugly.

J: But are you saying that you don't believe in Arvo Part?

E: No but I'm saying there is music which fufills the same need for beauty as a substitute for a certain kind of sublimity; beauty as a material manifestation of the sublime. We have, I won't say a broader, but I would say, a different notion of what that is which includes a lot of things which [wouldn't have made it in.]

J: Different as compared to when?

E: Different compared to what my father would have thought of as beautiful or what Brahms would have thought of as beautiful.

J: How about Schoenberg?

E: Even Schoenberg, I think. Who knows what Schoenberg knew about popular culture.

J: Oh, so you think that this has to do with a distinction between popular and elitist notions.

E: Only in the sense that it was because of black music, and the transformation of black music in Britain and America in the sixties both equally. That was the entree for certain sounds, and certain ways of thinking about sound into the larger Western culture. And it's not because of popular culture per se, but that's definitely one of the biggest avenues for it; the gritty sound of distortion [or of voices being pushed to be heard over amplified instruments]. There maybe others, but that's certainly the most visible. Take Robert Plant's voice. Ultimately, you've got to think of that as beautiful, if you like Led Zeppelin.. Whether you want to call it beautiful or not, it's got to fulfill the same role in your mind or in your emotional world as Caruso's voice fulfilled for an opera lover. And you could still say, "I like it because it's ugly" but the terms are clashing [but the reality is no different.]

□

J: But then if what passes for ugly is just music which ascribes to different values of sound production, what's really ugly.

E: To be really new-age about it, there are people who want music which "projects negative energy" to a really high degree. Say, hardcore or thrash or, James White and the Blacks stuff that was really designed to be a kind of fuck you to the world.

J: That seems to be a real central aesthetic at the moment.

E: But it's not my aesthetic. And ultimately insofar as I like music which derives from that aesthetic is as much a misunderstanding as when someone boogies down to Nusrat Fatah Ali Khan.

[Stuff on NIN and nihilism]

J: I've been noticing that this whole conversation is pretty much assuming that popular culture defines the terms of discussion. Does popular culture define the agenda?

E: Of course it does.

J: So that's a given for you.

E: Well yeah, it all ends up on the record shelf.

J: But the BOAC all-stars end up on the record shelf.

E: I don't make a distinction in my mind as a player or as a writer.

J: You might not make a distinction in terms of what you do on a day to day level or when you are writing music, in terms of what bin its going to go into in the CD store.

E: Its a double edged thing because if I could come up with drum tracks like Prince, I think I'd like to do that. The other side of that is, to put this in the most careful way possible, I don't always want to write things in 4/4. Its not as if I want to be commercial or non-commercial, or I want to be pop or not pop, but its that I listen to a lot of music which is pop in one form or another but if I tried to "bring that music into the concert hall" I would be as hypocritical as Ligeti. In other words, the idea is not to save classical music by making it groovier.

J: But in a way, that is what you're doing.

E: But that's not the intent. the intent is to make music that I like. And I would be happier if it wasn't played in concert halls. On the other hand, I don't want to play for 15 year olds on ecstasy either. But I would like to play for the kind of people that went to Weather Report concerts when I was 16.

J: So where are all those people these days?

E: I don't know. I think that there not listening to that much music.

J: That brings up the question of what ever happened to the music. Do you feel that the music had a potential which was never really developed.

E: I do feel that, in a simplistic sense, fusion and art rock got a raw deal because they were discredited. But on the other hand, there was a necessary purging because so much of it was really awful. Incidentally, that was my political reason for choosing Black Market, because I don't want that thrown out with the Lee Ritenour records and their mutant off-spring in Kenny G. I think there was a lot of value in fusion and in art-rock, since that was a place where you could think big musically.

J: Or you could release an hour long piece of instrumental music on a major label.

E: In a way the problem was that things afterwards all got so literary. I mean, in terms of criticism, punk was really a literary movement in that you could say much more interesting things about the movement than there was to hear in the music.

J: Don't you also feel there was a problem with art-rock and fusion in that it was not entirely clear what they were trying to "say" in that sense. It was as purely formalist as Babbitt.

E: What, you mean you don't think the message of Chick Corea's "The Leprachaun" was clear. (Laughs) Yeah, the problem was that

these guys were not real deep thinkers in any ways other than musically.

J: I don't know about that, actually. Yes, I do think that is probably the case for Chick Corea, at least in his post-Scientology phase. But I'm not so sure about, for example, Zawinul.

E: You're right [in that these guys have a problem in articulating what is behind what they're doing which classical musicians don't have.] In classical music, the liner notes are built in. You don't get pieces without the schtick. Say if the Ligeti Piano Concerto was called "The Pygmy" or something, as opposed to the Leprechaun, and you didn't know who Ligeti was or what his history was, and you had a picture of Ligeti and the band standing somewhere in Hamburg and some cover art. God knows what sort of existence it would have. In any case, I would guarantee you that half the people who are saying things about it now wouldn't be saying anything about it.

J: It wouldn't go anywhere now. But it might have had some potential twenty years ago. For example, would the same people who listened to Cecil Taylor have gotten into that?

E: But would the same people who got into Cecil Taylor have gotten into him without the critical guidance of the free jazz critics. And there were no intelligent critics who made a reasonable case for fusion. There was no discourse.

J: It was written off as "commercial" immediately after it started.

E: Nobody took, for example, King Crimson, seriously as music or credentialled it in that way. [Music needs a discourse. . .] Take any of the midcentury modernist icons. Take Mixtur. What the hell would people do with mixtur without the schtick. Nothing. It would be like the Metal Machine Music of the early sixties.

J: When you say schtick you mean the packaging?

E: Yeah. The packaging which includes the premise, and the analysis, and all that. I'm not talking about the "Stockhausen is from Serious" stuff which came later. I'm talking about the intellectual cache which came with the earlier stuff. The list of the equipment used, [the detailed structural descriptions of the work] etc. That why I said that the liner notes came [were the music].

J: I agree, but I think there might be better examples.

E: OK take Structures.

J: There you go.

E: Well that's an easy target because its so absolutely arid on every level.

J: At least with Stockhausen, say, take Mantra, there's a weird sort of groove which you can project on it every now and then.

E: Or Momenta has these really cool things in it. I've got nothing against Stockhausen per se. I'm just reacting to Mixtur because I just heard it. Certainly take Babbitt. Say he booked himself as a new band opening for Pantera.

J: So music needs a discourse. But what role does it have.

E: The role it can have is as a way into the music.

J: But into what specifically? Into the idea? Into the expressive character of the music? Or what?

E: I'm not sure. That's a good question.

J: It has served as some kind of way into the music for me and for you, I imagine. So, though I hate to admit it, I was reading A.B. Spellman's Four Lives in the Bebop Business as I was discovering the music, and that had something to do with the appeal of the music.

E: Sure, but you don't like all the music equally. Who were they, Jackie Maclean, Herbie Nichols, Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman. You probably don't listen to Jackie Maclean, right? [So the discourse serves as a way in which allows you to begin to make your own judgements about the music.]

J: On the other hand, the jazz criticism of the fifties was a fairly impoverished discourse.

E: And I think it still is.

J: I think the value of it, for me at least, was to give a signal that the ideas which lay behind non-classical musics were a legitimate topic of discussion.

E: Right. I remember thinking, when I was an undergraduate that it really was a form of academic racism that certain music was discussed and other musics were not.

□

J: But to get back to the question. Why does a discourse matter?

E: Its a really interesting question [and] I'm not sure why. But what I am sure about is that a lot of the icons of high culture would wither away into total nothingness, obscurity and meaningless if it were not for the accompanying discourse.

J: Like Bach?

E: No. I'm talking about the modernist canon. It would be beyond irrelevant. And the converse of that is true as well. [All sorts of music would immediately be seen as important if there was a discourse accompanying it which it deserved.] So for example, Wynton Marsalis, who I respect even though I never want to hear any of his music, said recently that the critical community is in a shambles. And I think he's generally right. It's so difficult right now to find anybody whose writing about contemporary music in an intelligent way.

J: Why is it in shambles? Critics have always been wrong most of the time. Its no crime to be wrong, of course. But take a critic like Hanslick. One got the sense that the he actually stood for something in the sense that he genuinely responded to the music which he was championing. My sense with, for example, (Boston Globe critic) Richard Dyer, or a guy like Osterreich, or Donal Henahan is that if you asked them to give you any indication that they have actually listened to the pieces which they profess to support, the couldn't do so.

E: [Or take a critic like Kyle Gann.] There's such a personal agenda involved, personal in the sense of he wants to be let in and taken seriously which forces him to set up battles where there are none and make alliances where none are necessary and constantly look for the next big thing, as opposed to offering his honest assessment of what he's hearing and what its about. Everything is couched in terms of these Don Quixote like battles that he decides to fight.

J: Specifically, what are the battles?

E: Like the uptown versus downtown distinction.

J: OK. Does that distinction no longer exist in any meaningful sense?

E: Yeah, but its meaningful to so few people that its like a battle between two rabidly warring factions of the Methodist church. Or the communist party. This whole idea that it took an incredible amount of courage for Eve Beglarian to "come out" as a downtown composer or for Norman Yamada to use Schoenberg quote in a piece which he had done at the Knitting Factory, is really absurd in the sense that nobody cares about what any of us do. Now maybe Columbia University cares about maintaining a certain compositional practice and even that is really being undermined by what's going on there now. And maybe this clique of about six people who are "downtown music" might care about toeing a certain aesthetic line at the Knitting Factory, but really most people who think of themselves as downtown people only want to go to a place which has dirt on the floor and where the performers are wearing scruffy black clothes and the music is coming out of amplifiers. All downtown music really is a certain attitude towards performance and presentation. And uptown music to the extent that it exists, also has its own dress code and [instrumental practice]. [The point here is that] these distinctions are meaningless to just about the entire music listening audience in the same way that [wars within] the world of academic music narrowly defined are. These are just protective little shells which don't have any relevance to anybody other than to the people involved. In a sense, they're like divinity

schools which are producing people who will have fine, quiet lives doing things which are very important to them and very unimportant to everyone else. And then, there are all sorts of high school students who are making all sorts of weird interesting music in their garage bands. And maybe the tragedy is that they have no place to go.

J: No place to go, in terms of what?

E: No place to go musically.

J: Unless they're the next Trent Reznor, in which case they definitely have some place to go.

E: Yeah, but that's like being the next Michael Jordan.

J: But isn't that the way it should be? Many are called, few are chosen?

E: No, definitely not. An extremely high scale meritocracy, absolutely not. I completely disagree with that. I think that there should be room for all sorts of music which is in between the pinnacle of greatness and OK let just plug in the guitars. If I were to create a musical utopia which has some possibility of coming into being, it would be one where people could make a lot of music with their friends and perform it for the sake of doing it [without worrying about whether it measures up to industry standards of professionalism.]

J: Kyle Gann would probably agree with that.

E: On any day to day basis, Kyle and I would agree on any number of things. It just seems like his writing manifests one neurosis or another, so that the Nancarrow book comes out and it's no different from any other sort of [formalist, theoretical text.] It's just a bunch of numbers. What does that have to do with all the things he's saying about what makes music important or vital.

J: So, he's strangely schizophrenic in that sense. And that's combined with the other problem with him is that he always seems to be working out a personal grudge against the "musical establishment" which doesn't seem to want to include him.

E: The grudge seems to be this permanent sight line which is attached to his assault weapon. And it's just a matter of who he's going to point it at. Now, I've never really been on the receiving end. He covered me quasi-favorably when he decided that BOAC was the answer, and then when he decided it was the devil, he turned against me.

J: Did he decide that, or was that choice thrust upon him?

E: Yeah he decided.

J: On musical grounds?

E: Certainly not. If you compare the programming from year to year in any sort of objective way, there's no reason why the years which he thought it was so terrific are any different from what happening now. In fact, there was definitely more Babbitt and Carter on in the old days. It just that he was part of the club. He wanted input. In the early days when it had nothing to do with him, he was applauding it because it was something he could use to champion his ideas of opposition to the Zorn downtowners and the Babbitt uptowners. But then he wanted to have more of a voice, he would send them lists of composers, and his agenda was not taken into consideration and his own music wasn't played.

J: So how does he compare with Richard Dyer?

E: Before we get back to Dyer, I'd like to say that I think the Times is in the best shape its ever been. At least three of those guys seem to be operating with some level of integrity and intelligence. I think Ross is really smart and I think Tommasini is basically on the level. I think Tommasini basically believes that new music is important, that new music doesn't just exist in the academy and that he would genuinely like to be blown away by a piece he heard in a concert. Of course, I would think anybody who said anything good about me would be on the level.

To get back to Richard Dyer, here is a guy who is fighting battles which he was taught to fight when he was 25 and receives his marching orders from the brahmins of culture in Boston like Harbison and Davidovsky. I remember a review he wrote of Ligeti where he wrote that the concert "reaffirm the values which people like us believe in." I wish I had more presence of mind to have written the Globe to ask them how they could possibly publish something like that. But that is what he believes. He's upholding the standards of Western culture which are under attack.

J: People like us.

E: Right. Who are people like us. White, mainstream audiences who want to go to Handel and Haydn society concerts in good faith. And for them, there is a place for Boston Musica Viva.

J: But in another way, new music doesn't have a place for those sorts of audiences. Or, it only has a place if its sufficiently ghettoized.

E: In a provincial town like Boston the place is well understood. So you have these concerts in a school where the director gets up before hand and explains why the music you are going to hear is important, even though it sounds like shit, and then you put up with it and go to a wine and cheese reception afterwards and everybody's happy.

J: So you feel that he doesn't want to be blown away by a piece which he heard.

E: No. He wants his values upheld.

J: And the values are antithetical to that.

E: Right, you don't want to be blown away.

J: Or you don't want to respond?

E: You want to respond in a way that make you not question the things you believe in. I want to hear music which makes me feel, "Wow. Maybe things are not quite the way I thought they were." With a guy like Dyer, he wants to hear music that will make him say, "Yes, things are just the way I thought they were. God is in his heaven and all's right with the world."

□

J: But why is it that we would want to have written about isn't covered [by Dyer or anyone else.]

E: It may have to do with pop culture in the sense of that everything has to do with the market now. Sports pages have more to do with contracts than with sports, or entertainment pages talk about how much stars are getting payed for being in a movie than about movies. It really shocked with my students how little patience they had for music which had comparatively little commercial potential. It was a really radical thing for a student to seek out some kind of music which wasn't not made with the intention of having a major hit.

The idea of high art only exists in the context of that. So NIN can be high art, or if they're nerdier, its Pink Floyd.

J: So they don't really make a high-low distinction.

E: They do but only within commercial musics. Whereas the traditional distinction is that commercial music is low art and non-market musics have to potential at least to be high.

J: Is this a good thing, or is this a bad thing, or doesn't it matter?

E: I think its a bad thing because I think that about what my musical life would have been like if I only limited myself to music which could have sold a billion dollars worth of records, then I wouldn't have heard most of my favorite music. It really limits the scope. Or course, when you limit the scope, there are all sorts of places you can get to. I think the things that are brilliant about NIN couldn't have been gotten at unless he started with these severe restrictions on the kind of music which he was going to make. I also think something is lost because of the whole workaholic mentality which dominates everything. There are no more stop and smell the roses moments in our society anymore. You don't do sports you

work out. You only do things which have a direct material benefit, and I think that fuck things up pretty radically.

J: Well, its been this way for a while.

E: Since November, 1980 to be exact.

J: Any signs of life.

E: I don't despair. Anybody who looks for ways out will find them. But what concerns me is that so few people are looking for ways out.

J: I suppose one would have hoped that your students would be looking for a reaction.

E: Well they are, Hendrix and Led Zeppelin.

J: Another form of commercial music.

E: I had one student come up to me in the whole time I have been teaching who discovered a non-commercial form of music on his own. You know who it was, it was the violinist, Malcolm Goldstein. He saw how radical the idea of doing music which wasn't designed to make a million dollars was.