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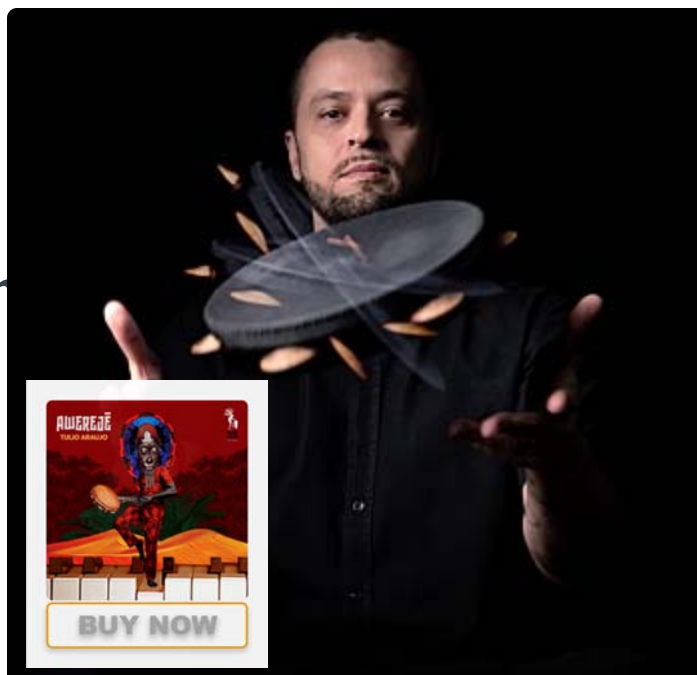
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SHOWCASE

Book Review

Sound Experiments: The Music Of The AACM By Paul Steinbeck



Awerejê

By [Tulio Araujo](#)

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VIEW
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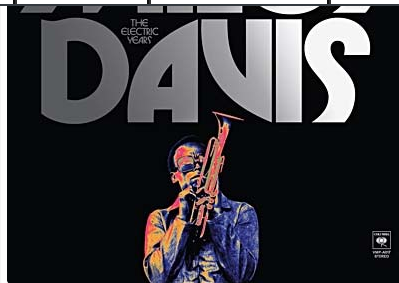
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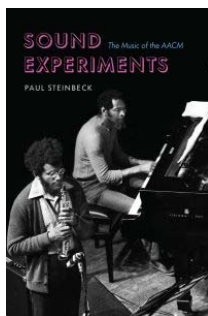
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By

Tom Spargo
November 6,
2023
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*Sound
Experiments:
The Music of
the AACM*
Paul
Steinbeck

SONG OF THE DAY



Time Lapse In Armonica Tenzone

From *Time Lapse in Armonica Tenzone*
by [Giuseppe Costa](#)

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University of

Chicago

Press

Hardback

2022/

Paperback

2023

Paul

Steinbeck's


*Sound**Experiments*

is a historical
narrative and
technical

analysis of
the music of
the

Association
for the
Advancement
of Creative
Musicians
(AACM).

Steinbeck
traces the
chronology
of this wildly
creative
organization
from its
origins in the
mid-1960s
to the
present day
through the



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PLAYLIST



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dedicated to a particularly influential album, composition, or live performance. Published by University of Chicago Press, the hardback edition of *Sound Experiments* first appeared back in 2022 and is now even more accessible to readers in this new paperback edition.

Steinbeck's book begins with a detailed analysis of the two albums which sparked the AACM into

PREVIEW

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | City of Lights
Jon Herington | 05:50 |
| 2 | Drawn Away
Ben Wendel | 07:14 |
| 3 | One Of Two
Wayne Krantz | 04:17 |
| 4 | Cherubs Contemplating Tacky Bass...
Chris Dahlgren, Ben Monder, Tim Ries, Kenny... | 09:24 |
| 5 | The Wheel
Frankfurt Radio Bigband, Jim McNeely, Chris ... | 08:45 |
| 6 | Real Time
Rick Peckham | 07:13 |
| 7 | Obelisk
Graham Costello | 09:25 |
| 8 | Camp Meeting
Bruce Harnack, Christian McBride, Jack De Ja... | 05:43 |

PREMIUM



Theodor Mirisclavos

composer / conductor

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(Delmark, 1966) and *Levels and Degrees of Light* by

[Muhai Richard Abrams](#)

(Delmark, 1968).

Experimenting similarly

with

collective

improvisation

and

extended

20+ minute

compositions,

both

bandleaders

contrasted

greatly in

their

approach to

timbre and

mood.

Mitchell's

album

continued

the

improvisational

innovations

of

[Ornette Coleman](#)

with the

volume,

aggression

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whereas
Abrams'
album
emphasized
sparse
textures,
woodwind
pedal tones
and even
birdsong
sounds. The
sonic
contrasts of
these two
founding
albums sets
the tone for
the rest of
the book, in
which the
never-
ending
search for
greater
expression,
creativity,
and
iconoclasm is
always at
the forefront
of each
musician's
imagination.

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The following nine chapters trace the evolution of the AACM discography over subsequent decades. From the 1970s, it covers classic albums such as *For Trio* by [Anthony Braxton](#) (Arista, 1977) as well as *Air Time* (Nessa, 1978) by [Henry Threadgill](#), [Fred Hopkins](#) and [Steve McCall](#). From the 1980s, Steinbeck chooses

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Voyager (1987), an early example of computer-music in which intelligent algorithms improvised in real time dialogue with human musicians. From the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, Steinbeck analyses music by the likes of [Fred Anderson](#), [AACM Great Black Music Ensemble](#), [Wadada Leo Smith](#), and [Nicole Mitchell](#).

The final chapter brings the narrative right into the present day, with the analysis of a

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recorded by
the Artifacts
Trio
comprised of
cellist
[Tomeka Reid](#),
flautist
[Nicole Mitchell](#)
and
drummer
[Mike Reed](#).
Studded
with
compositions
by and
homages to
former
AACM
members,
Steinbeck
demonstrates
the enduring
importance
of history
and lineage
to current
AACM
members.

The author's
analysis is
undoubtedly
highly
technical,
and his book
includes

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pieces or
transcriptions
sourced
through his
personal
connections
to members
of the
AACM.
Reading
whilst
simultaneously
listening to
the
recordings
cited is
therefore a
seamless
and highly
rewarding (if
not
sometimes
quite
exhausting)
process. The
sheer
complexity
and
experimental
nature of the
AACM's
music, in
particularly
its emphasis
on collective
improvisation,

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sound tools,

really tests
the limits of
standard
musical
notation.

This is
something
that AACM
constantly
grappled
with, and
their ability
to
experiment
with a
mixture of
strange
symbols,
mathematical
approximations,
colors and
words to
depict their
musical
intentions is
seriously
impressive.
Even for
readers who
do not read
music so
fluently, the
inclusion of
highly visual
examples of

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results in an
engaging
and highly
immersive
reading
experience.

Steinbeck's
focus is not
exclusively
musical; he
remains
interested
throughout
with the
social,
political, and
economic
forces that
underpinned
the evolution
of the music.
Successive
generations
of AACM
musicians
played a
crucial role
altering
perceptions
of 'art'
globally, not
only in music
but across
other
domains



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and fashion.

They were especially important in breaking down the racial barriers which traditionally segregated 'white experimental composers' from 'African-American jazz musicians.'

The music of the AACM is certainly some of the most artistically challenging music ever recorded. *Sound Experiments* is therefore an invaluable companion for those looking to

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discography,
as well as a
rich source of
information
for those
looking to
dive more
deeply into
the depths of
musical
analysis.

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