Why Not?

By Steve Turnidge

We live in the last part of our century. The history of our times is now past. In the next century history will remember only certain things about this one.

Most activities, artistic and otherwise, will be done quite differently than they are now. The results of these activities will surprise us, and they will be created by those of us alive and growing in these suprising times.

The art forms to come will be more meaningful. This is because we, as artists, have a choice in the matter. These works will include all existing art forms, blended with as yet unknown catalysts. Potentially, the content will descend from a movement at the end of this 20th century.

Picture the present as a small circle, bounded by all that has been. The future is a large circle, bounded only by what could be. In that large target, we must distinguish the areas of the preferable from the merely possible. This is a formidable task, one to be faced with honesty and care. The quality and tenor of our performances will determine the direction of art for the next decades to come.

This may sound pretentious, but *why not?* It is well time for us to take responsibility for channeling the directions of art into creative, transforming, evolutionary forms. The changes which face mankind has the same area of possibility as we have. If informing and transforming the basic creative urges of human beings from destructive to productive action is within the range of the possible, is it not in the range of the preferable?

Idealists have lived and died throughout history. Not often have they had the tools to communicate their ideals and information so swiftly. Information is becoming a gas. As soon as it is written, created or derived, it can be worldwide in a matter of moments. This has the potential of having rich content — or to be polluted, as does the very air we breathe.

There will be a split, growing faster and faster, between the recipients of this ever more specialized information and those unaware of it. Eventually more and more people will find sources and receptacles for their information, but the people who develop those sources will determine the shape and bias of that which is consumed. At this time television and newspapers feed information (with bias) to the general public. Soon, networks will deliver as much different content as there are consumers. At this time, knowledge will become fragmented, and the only things that we'll have in common will be the things that came before. The classic writings of literature, even pop art of Elvis and the Beatles.

It is the responsibility of the creators of these new art forms to visualize the future for which they are created. The foundations for this future have been laid over all the history that has come before — but from here it will grow very fast. The speed will make evolution hardly recognizable as such, but that is what it will be.

If we are aware of the streams of creation, we have a better chance of rescuing the future from those who would find pleasure and profit in war and destruction. I am very optimistic for the future, as we can each find our role in delivering it.

Last Meeting:

■ Our thanks to Brian Karr from the HIT Lab for his very enlightening discussion on 3D Audio at our January meeting.

Next Meeting:

■ February 1, 7:30pm, at the Art Institute of Seattle, 2323 Elliot Avenue, Seattle.

■ Our guest speaker for February is Stephan Schier, a representative of a local manufacturer of light and sound devices. He will wire up the room and demonstrate these devices, and also ask some insightful questions...

A Look Ahead:

■ On March 1, Craig Rosenberg from the HIT Lab will demonstrate his MIDIBird. This device is a six degree of freedom position tracker to MIDI controller.

■ April 5 brings us musician Einar Ask and his portable battery powered MIDI Studio.

FYI

■ Free Enterprise Classroom, which present the latest technologies to provide Super-Teaching in a Super- Learning Environment. So advanced and so unique that it is patented. A preview explaining how it works will be presented on Wednesday, January 27, at 7:30 P.M. in the Ranier Room at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Lynnwood, located at the 44th Street Exit off I-5. It is very important to be prompt. For more information feel free to contact Joe Marshalla at 206-523-9548 till 1 A.M.

Letters To The Editor

John, Rod and NEMUS:

Thank you for keeping me in the mailing list the last two years. All past Presidents deserve this small courtesy don't you think!

I am pleased, slightly suprised and actually excited about this new direction for NEMUS. Cyber-Arts Northwest seems a very timely, intelligent and opportunistic course of action.

As an occasional student of Mondo 2000, cyberspace journals and psychedelic revival propaganda I can appreciate the need to update your insatiable appetite for technology and how it brings meaning to our tedious little lives.

I would respectfully caution you, however, to be aware of at least two vital areas that could easily be devalued in the rush to endorse a cybernetic future:

(1) do not betray the musical roots of the organization; nor should you abandon the content and integrity of music that can stand on its own merit without the aid of sensational visual gadgetry.

(2) be cautious of the Cyber-Speak that reduces the power of original thought and language to a trendy cult of insider techno-gibberish... (just read any issue of Mondo 2000 to witness the arrogance of people intoxicated by their own vernacular!!).

That said, let me commend the obviously ambitious efforts of Steve Turnidge and wish him success in his new position. If Cyber-Arts Northwest can finally begin to achieve the "professional" networking capability that I always envisioned for NEMUS, I will happily return to contribute in your shared vision.

Sincerely,

James R. Cobb III

Poet-Composer

P.S. For guest speaker: Composer Norman Durkee who recently showcased his interactive music at On The Boards using headphones and light goggles for a psycho-opera of the senses. You can bet he's dabbling in virtual reality.

James, Thank you for your support. As long as we continue to (1) Accept reality, (2) Choose Independence, and (3) Take Action, we should be able to succeed.

Stephan Schier, our guest speaker in February, provided the "light goggles" at the very Norman Durkee show you mention.

John -

Thanks for the newsletters; things had gotten disturbingly quiet the past couple months! So what does an old NEMUSite think about the changing of the guard? It's a little bit of a shock to see the name of NEMUS pass away into history, even though it has hovered near demise for some time. But fortunately, its passing comes in the most positive context; a rebirth accompanied by fresh energy and an expanded focus.

The coming of age of the technology which provided an environment for NEMUS' former vibrancy has led to its very obsolence, I think. While electronic music technology continues to evolve, it has reached a level of maturity that makes it accessible in a fairly sophisticated form to non-specialists. I believe this accounts for the reduced interest we have seen for NEMUS the past couple years, which has been a specialist organization operating at the popular level.

At the same time, technologies for other electronic media have also advanced to allow entry of non-specialists into those fields. And the improved technology facilitates a bringing together of the different media (Multimedia). So this creates a lot of opportunity for everyone, including specialists who think of themselves as musicians, electronic or not, or those who are or wish to become generalists, to participate in exciting new ways.

An organization such as Cyber-Arts Northwest can help foster that participation, and such a goal is a close counterpart to goals previously established for NEMUS. Also, CyberArts' broader scope should attract diversity, vitality and longevity. So, fond farewell NEMUS, and welcome CyberArts Northwest!

- Allan Tamm

Now, an item of real interest to CyberArtists (and electronic musicians ;-)

Forwarded by Allan Tamm

Call for international participation in new art/science project.

KNOWBOTIC RESEARCH Simulation Room -Mosaic of Mobile Sound Data

We are a group of artists and scientists at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne, and will be showing a VR installation in February at the MEDIALE93 - Festival for Media Arts and Media Future - in Hamburg, Germany.

The installation, housed in the freight ship Cap San Diego in Hamburg - harbour, has three main areas. Section one is a sophisticated, walk - in data - base utilising a collection of sound samples from around the world, which will be used to produce a virtual 'sound room'.

The sound data will correspond to the second section, a physical room, where visitors will be able to navigate through the space with the aid of a mobile ultrasonic sensor and an artificial eye display and activate the data to a realtime-concert. The action of the visitors, within this 'virtual organism,' will be displayed on a video screen shown in a control room area (the third area).

We welcome your participation for the international sound - data - base: To participate in this international project we need from

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by John Hokenson

Ah... "The Best Laid Plans of Mice and Men...." This month, I am not doing the editing and lay-out for **The CyberArtist.** You see, there was this storm.... This editorial is actually being *handwritten* with a pencil and yellow pad in my dark and cold kitchen (it has the best natural light).

Though I suffered minimal damage from the storm (a blown-up surge arrester on my fax machine), this experience has given me something to think about. As CyberArtists we are heavily dependent on technology — moreso than most. While it's true the UPS kept my computer running for a while after the power finally went off for good yesterday morning (24 hours ago) — eventually the batteries in it went dead as did the ones in the thermostat and alarm system.

As I stare at a house full of dead electronics equipment and the inside temperature slowly adjusts to ambient, it gives me time to reflect on where technology is leading us.

I recently read a SF novel, *The Turing Option,* by Harry Harrison and Marvin Minsky (former MIT AI researcher). It pointed out to me under certain conditions we can be vulnerable to the very technology we make use of to better our lives. The great storm of January 20, 1993 made this point crystal clear.

In a round-about way, what I am trying to say is — don't base your entire efforts on one critical piece of equipment or technology. *Diversify.* If your multimedia performance is computer driven, have a back-up. Make use of a UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply) so your system doesn't crash in the middle of the show due to a power fluctuation. Consider battery power....

With some forethought, we can lessen our vulnerability to the very technology we depend on. In the meantime, where did I put that catalog on emergency generators....

P.S. Thanks VERY much to our president Steve Turnidge for putting this newsletter together (He has power)!

For Sale:

you a 6 second long sound sample, a cultural statement, reflecting your personal attitude towards the "world". Please send this via email or ftp. (aiff, wave, next formats)

All participants and institutions will be credited in a publicly

NAMM Notes

By Einar Ask

I have been watching the Compuserve MIDI forum reports on the NAMM show, and offer these tidbits...

All the Compuserve people were uploading from a dedicated phone line in the Mackie booth.

The Yamaha QY20 will be on the U.S. market soon. It exists outside of the country already. It is reported to be slightly thicker, has bigger keys, a bigger display and greater memory. It also will cost a little more.

Automatic sheet music reading software which uses a scanner is available from more than one vendor.

E-mu has a new one rack unit module: "...the Vintage Keys digital sample playback module featuring classic analog key-board sounds and 32 'analog-sounding' resonant filters."

Twelve Tone Systems have demonstrated the notation capabilities for Cakewalk for Windows. I guess it will be available soon.

Kurzweil has a K2000R rack-mount unit.

J.L. Cooper has the Fader-Master Pro which has 8 programmable sliders and 8 programmable buttons. 80 banks of setups, 20 user programmable. Multiples of these can be connected!

A lot of people have competetively priced hard disk recorders now, giving competion to the ADAT and other digital tape systems.

Cakewalk for Windows also has new sliders on screen which look more like sliders on a mixer, rather than the horizontal sliders on the current version.

displayed database during the exhibition. For more information by email from:

kr + cf@khm.uni-koeln.de Thank you for your support - KNOWBOTIC RESEARCH

Evolve or Die

by Einar Ask

I took it for granted that we lived in this HI-TECH computer based society with on-line services, cellular phones, notebook power like I never dreamed of, 256 tracks of midi sequencing, hard disk recording, and Video Toasters, all coming together to help us measly artsy-fartsy souls do unspeakably complicated acts on these computer thing-ees, while those poor people who don't have silicon based spending in their budget just go through life thinking that all computer users have greasy hair, pocket protectors, no chicks and certainly don't play sports.

And that was fine with me. I mean, just let those without computers be impressed when I perform "magic" like incorporating graphics in a page layout, or bring in news reports before the paper arrives.

But then I received a severe shock to my little world. While flying my home workstation through the latest issue of my work newsletter, my general manager and only other "computer guy" at work submitted an article to me, ON PAPER, neatly printed on his laser printer, for me to take home and RETYPE into the newsletter. I mentally forgave him and figured he was just on drugs. But then, at the last minute before printing at work, he submitted another piece of paper with text neatly lasered into position.

I was saddened by this. I can only assume that when he takes work home, he retypes to transfer data as well.

Here's my point. My GM's actions disturbed me deeply because he demonstrated to me that even the HEAD GUY in charge of buying PCs for a company, and who actually has invested in a home system, hasn't realized what he has on his desk. Sure, he has accounting software, and balances his checkbook, but he hasn't looked at his hardware with an open mind. He hasn't realized that his machine—like his mind—can do *anything*, if applied.

The really sad part of my realization is that this is not unusual. My in-laws still have trouble booting-up sometimes (their VCR also flashes 12:00). Another guy at work just bought a 486 system to keep track of his paper route accounts. My brother has a $1,700.00 system just to run flight simulators for fun. I have no problem with these uses, I just want people to realize that the screen they are looking at is not really two dimensional. It should be seen as a portal to the new frontiers. I fear that if they don't realize the potentials early on in their computing days, they will continue to think that this box on their desk is just an expensive typewriter or a video game.

So now my view of the world has shifted from thinking that there are two classes in the electronic age, computer haves and computer have-nots, to thinking that there are people who understand the concept of the information society, and those who are so firmly anchored in the old schools of thought that they are blind to what is happening right in front of them. I used to record everything on my portastudio while plenty of people were sequencing "to beat the band".

I feel strongly about this because if it were not for my good friend opening my own eyes, I would not even be typing this now. We need to help anyone who seems to be having a difficult time with their digital lifestyle. We should at least show them that the well behind their screen is bottomless and that there are user groups like ours who can help them along.