

## Diamanda Galás on extreme vocals

There is a burst of power which keeps a phrase going, one note suspended, the timbres within the note changing constantly, building one on top of the other – and then a simple melody can be constructed from that changing note... is it extreme?

Perhaps the word is not extreme, but a free-flowing construction of a vocal phrase. For me, vacillating between densely packed sounds and straight tones, and straight tones with tones of different vibrato speed, is one kind of work I like to do. Engraving words, like a blade into lead, is another. There are

a million ways to go before processing the vocal sound. I can create a forensic picture of what I hear before the phrase starts.

If I sing my own work or “Ramblin’ Man” by Hank Williams, my take on the song may be considered extreme, because I am interested in what the song means. The outlaw jumping trains, leaving, leaving leaving... that’s what it’s all about: leaving because you want to and leaving because you have to.

I’m going away and you, Fate, cannot find me now. Now, finally, I am invisible and have switched you up,

you who follow me constantly. But not now. Now you are stuck in the concrete and I have moved behind you, walking backwards, with my hat on.

Now I am free from fear: I am fear. My ruminations can be transposed into sound; those ceaseless pricks of the needle up my spine can be articulated. I lean into them and thank oblivion for the moments of freedom before I must go back to the loser’s chair.

Afterwards I reappear at my doorstep and curse morbidity, who has left the nightlight on.

As usual. □

# Endless

Australian guitarist Marco Fusinato plugs in and plays from the moment a venue opens until it finally closes its doors. **Phil Freeman** discovers why

# Boogie



Marco Fusinato's *Spectral Arrows* in Melbourne, 2018

You walk into an art gallery, anticipating quiet contemplation of some photographs. Instead, you're confronted by a wall of amplifiers and an unceasing blast of screaming noise coming from a guitar-wielding man who stands, silent and impassive, his back to you. Maybe you flee immediately; maybe you sit down and let it batter you for a while. You have just experienced Australian artist Marco Fusinato's *Spectral Arrows*, an ongoing series of performances in museums and art galleries that last the entirety of the venue's opening hours.

Fusinato says that the project, which began in 2012 in Glasgow, came from a combination of factors. He found the life of a touring noise musician – travelling great distances to make improvised guitar music for 20 minutes to an hour – unfulfilling, and believed that extended performances would “privilege the nuances and surprises that occur”. He was also interested in the idea of “noise as sculpture” and taking over normally passive gallery spaces. “*Spectral Arrows*... bleeds all through the building,” he explains. “No matter what floor you are on it can be heard. So a big part of it is using the force of sound to create dimensions.”

The performances accompany exhibitions of *The Infinitives*, a series of massively blown up photographs from mass media of protesters wielding rocks. Five performances, from Rotterdam, Auckland, Melbourne, Singapore and Venice, have been released on limited edition LPs, containing one track per side. Some are collages made with many small edits, while others feature uninterrupted waves of noise; Fusinato says his goal is to offer “something that is indicative of the performance from my perspective”.

The music, as preserved on LP, is astonishingly aggressive. Fusinato favours piercing, crackling tones that venture much farther into the pain zone than, say, Keiji Haino's storm-cloud improvisations. It's hard to imagine lingering more than a few minutes in any building where this sound is going on.

People do, though. “I've been told that some people don't last more than a few seconds whilst others stay all day,” he says. “Apparently some sit on the floor, some lean against the white walls, some move around the space.” Naturally the performances induce strong reactions, but no one has ever tried to yank Fusinato's guitar away or unplug his amps. “My set-up is like a force field. No one can come near me.”

The physical effort of playing guitar for eight hours straight at extraordinary volume would be a challenge for anyone, but it's one Fusinato welcomes. “The first hour or so is the most difficult because I'm acutely aware of time and the task ahead,” he says. “At a certain point I lose sense of time and become fully immersed in the physicality of the sound... it takes me in directions I may not have imagined... consequently I tend not to have breaks.”

Radically lengthened musical experiences, whether all-night ragas, Nigerian juju music, a performance of Morton Feldman's six-hour *String Quartet No 2*, or a day spent lolling amid the precisely tuned drones and light-baths of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's New York Dream House, are meant to draw the listener in, to allow the mind and spirit to refocus. Fusinato's performances, by contrast, seem intended to drive the potential listener away. He describes *Spectral Arrows* as “like being crushed by waves at the ocean all day”, and research into the use of sound as torture has shown that high frequencies and extreme volume disorient the mind quite profoundly. But those who can withstand Fusinato's barrage may achieve a transcendence others will never know. □