

NIKOLAS COLLINS



LET THE STATE MAKE THE SELECTION

The music of Nicolas Collins is based on constructive subversion: guitars are wired backwards, with pickups driving strings; computers are used to perform simple tasks; simple electronic equipment is modified to function in a complex manner; feedback is encouraged rather than suppressed; reverberation serves as an end rather than a means; the genetic material of speech, song, and popular music is exploded, fragmented and recombined into new music.

Vaya Con Dios and *A Letter From My Uncle* were performed, recorded and mixed at Airshaft Studio, New York City. *A Clearing Of Deadness At One Hoarse Pool* was recorded at Media Study/Bufallo and mixed at Airshaft Studio.

Side A
A Letter From My Uncle
(14:53)

Performers: Susan Lyall, Robert Pass, Susan Tallman

Side B
Vaya Con Dios
(13:23)
A Clearing Of Deadness At One Hoarse Pool
(5:17)

Electronics designed, built, programmed and played by Nicolas Collins.

Recording engineered by Nicolas Collins

Mastered by Alan Moy, Masterdisk Corporation

Cover painting by Kazuhide Yamazaki

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Liner notes by Robert Pass

In *Vaya Con Dios*, the voice of Ronald Reagan, popular music, and cheap rhythm generators form an anticaricature of the United States' foreign policy in and cultural stereotyping of Central America. *Vaya* is a live performance (rather than a tape collage) in which the performer manipulates a digital delay loop and the computer-assisted synchronization of sound sources, looping and layering fragments of music and text. Vocal performances by Ronald Reagan, Julie London, the Andrews Sisters, and Slim Whitman.

The installation of *A Clearing Of Deadness At One Hoarse Pool* was co-produced by Media Study/Bufallo and the New York State Council on the Arts. The assistance of John Minkowsky is gratefully acknowledged.

Instruments similar to those in *A Letter From My Uncle* are used in *A Clearing Of Deadness At One Hoarse Pool*, a multi-track, real-time recreation of a sound installation set up in highly reverberant, empty swimming pool. The live, computer-automated mix of the pool tapes uses a shifting ratio of performer/computer control with performer and computer decisions based on rhythmic and dynamic coincidences.

Robert Pass

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There is an anti-authoritarian strain running through these pieces, because any assumed omnipotence of the composer is subverted as well. The intuitive interaction of a performing ensemble, control shared between performer and computer, and the inescapable logic of internal musical coincidence are highlighted rather than hidden. Collins' work challenges musical assumptions and compositional canons, and his iconoclasm has yielded a fresh, compelling music.



In *A Letter From My Uncle*, the ensemble plays specially modified electric guitar-like instruments that act as complex playable filters. As determined by the score, and with a computer acting as a switching device, the performers electronically call up various sound sources (a scanning radio, pre-recorded tapes, electronic noise generators, and the live singing voices of the ensemble) that are fed into their instruments, driving the strings. The vibrating strings are dampened, fretted, plucked, strummed and retuned by the performers in a special technique developed for this piece. The text, recited and sung by the ensemble, is a letter ruminating on the practical application of music and technology in the Third World. Recorded live.