



All clear: Brad Lubman's "Clear Housing" and Rhonda Allen's "Clearing House" will be presented at the All-Purpose Room.

Digital cubism

Music

by Josh Mailman

Music made on a laptop computer? It's nothing new in the Rochester underground music scene. And now you can add Brad Lubman to the mix. "Confrontational, severe, meditative, ambient-electro-acoustic [music]" is how the classically trained conductor, composer, percussionist, and Eastman School of Music professor describes his *Clear Housing*, part of a sound and visual installation opening this week at the All-Purpose Room. Rhonda Allen's *Clearing House* provides the visual counterpoint.

Based on an advance copy of Lubman's *Clear Housing*, I'd say its diversity and sophistication are the main attractions. One of its eight parts, "I Herd Voices, 2," suggests the nostalgia of old dusty records combined with the suspense of hearing depth charges from inside a submarine. The crisp energy, irregular rhythms, and blazing violence of "K.O.M.2" make it the 21st century counterpart to the "Dance of the Earth" or the "Sacrificial Dance" from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. Samples of Lubman's own acoustic compositions weave into the rich fabrics of "Used Psychology" and "blue sapphire."

"Noise, distortion, and textural inconsistencies are integral parts of my work," Lubman says. What he doesn't mention is that crystal clarity is an integral part as well. Lubman's palette is the entire spectrum of sounds, from the most naturalistic to the most technological: tweeting birds, fluttering insect wings, placid melodies, ambient harmonies, evil synthesizer riffs, computerized speech, low-tech telecommunication glitches, clicks and pops from LP records.

"Though we live in times of extreme technological advancement, I like to give the impression that we still have limitations," Lubman says. "Hence I believe in the use of noise, distortion, and textural inconsistencies." Yet, these sounds are subtly evocative. In the old days of LP records, we used to listen by sifting music from the surface noise produced by the record player. The sounds in *Clear Housing*, however, seem to blur those categories into a smooth continuum that spans from musical and wild-life sounds right up to the physical imperfections of the sound equipment we're using. The sound of sound equipment contributes to the

reality of the mood; the continuum of sound is the reality of life.

Picasso's cubist paintings give the impression of viewing still objects simultaneously from several perspectives. Lubman's sound-art is *digital cubism*: you hear a temporal phenomenon — a sentence spoken or a physical object moving — simultaneously at several speeds. Sometimes spoken sentences are chopped up into beginning, middle, and end so they can be heard all at once while repeating in a loop. Sometimes the spoken words are stretched out like Silly Putty — the aural equivalent to the visual effects in Michael Snow's experimental film *Corpus Callosum* (2002). Lubman's *Clear Housing* certainly does stimulate the visual imagination. It's ideal for a multi-purpose exhibition space like the All-Purpose Room.

Singer, violinist, and co-curator Heather Gardner calls the APR "an art studio and performance space shared by a collective of artists, composers, and musicians committed to showing work that blurs the line between visual art, music, and words." What is unusual about the APR stems from its connections to the Eastman School: In addition to visual art and sound installations, the APR presents live concerts of 20th-century classical and avant-garde music. By encouraging these disparate artistic media to rub elbows, the curators hope to stimulate innovation in the local artistic community.

The opening of *Clear Housing/Clearing House* will provide an opportunity to view Allen's visual art while allowing the unique Lubman sound to wash over us. Perhaps people will laugh and chat about its humorous moments. As Lubman says, "There are so many new and different ways to enjoy music." ■

Clear Housing/Clearing House opens on Sunday, October 12, from 1 to 4 p.m. It continues on subsequent Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, from 7 to 10 p.m., through November 1 at the All-Purpose Room, 8 Public Market, Info: www.allpurposeroom.org or 423-0320.