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## **Graded on a Curve: Object Collection, *cheap&easy* OCTOBER**

BY JOSEPH NEFF | MARCH 1, 2017



Noise-opera isn't exactly a hybrid encountered every day. Those who undergo a twitch of excitement over the rarity of the combo might want to investigate Object Collection, a NYC-based performance group led by writer-director Kara Feely and composer Travis Just. They've freshly issued *cheap&easy* OCTOBER, a wild and wooly intermingling of experimental disciplines with a thematic focus on revolution and its commemoration. Recorded live in the East Village at La MaMa on October 17, 2015, it's out now on compact disc and digital through the Infrequent Seams label.

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Opera is succinctly described as a theatrical work set to music. That covers a whole lot of territory, including the release under consideration here. Apparently, there's been some prior debate over whether to categorize Object Collection as a musical outfit or an experimental theater group. Releasing a CD surely tilts them toward the former, but as the 73 minutes of *cheap&easy OCTOBER* unfurl the essence of the performative remains.

Under the guidance of Feely and Just, the incarnation of Object Collection documented here features the voices of Avi Glickstein, Tavish Miller, Daniel Allen Nelson, Fulya Peker, and Deborah Wallace, the violin, bass, mandolin, and percussion of Andie Springer, the guitar, bass, and percussion of Taylor Levine, the synthesizer, guitar, trumpet, and percussion of Aaron Meicht, and the drums and guitar of Owen Weaver.

As stated above, there's not a whole lot of precedent in the noise-opera category, but what immediately sprung to this writer's mind was John Gavanti, also from NYC (of course), and their self-titled No Wave splatter-growl transmogrification of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, released in 1980 on the Hyrax label (later put out on CD by Atavistic). A merger of key No Wave units Mars (Mark Cunningham, Sumner Crane, China Berg) and DNA (Ikue Mori, Arto Lindsay), John Gavanti delivered a formidable racket.

In his review for *Trouser Press*, the distinguished critic Glenn Kenny wrote: "Some have called [*John Gavanti*] the most unlistenable record ever made, and that's a fine invitation indeed." While there are some similarities, particularly horn bleat/ honk and string scrape, unlistenable is not exactly what Object Collection is up to. Instead, in Feely's words, they strive for "sensory overload." Obviously, folks who don't see the distinction are unlikely to be purchasing a copy of *cheap&easy OCTOBER* any time soon.

The main diff is that John Gavanti's sole release is something of a fuck you taken to elaborate extremes, while this release finds Object Collection inquisitive if often sonically pummeling. Based on interviews about the aftermath of the Gezi Park Protests in Turkey and Trotsky's "History of the Russian Revolution," the piece concerns three events: the Russian Revolution of 1917, Sergei Eisenstein's film *October: Ten Days that Shook the World* from 1928, and the founding of the art journal *October* in 1976.

In short, as described by Aaron Schimberg in a *Bomb Magazine* interview, it's "a commemoration of commemorations of the October Revolution," or as Feely put it, "each consecutive event commemorates the next." And if the opening section "Pay No Attention to These Lies" erupts into noisy life just short of 90 seconds in, the outburst is preceded by two mixed-gender voices, their utterances impassioned yet unequivocally musical.

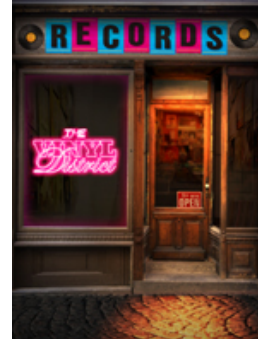
On the instrumental side, the opener pounds the pavement like a deeply Swans and Sonic Youth-enamored mid-'80s combo collaborating with Leroy Jenkins in prime string-thrash mode. Indeed, Andie Springer's violin stands out, a scenario extending into "The Situation Was Getting Complicated" as the atmosphere takes on the

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syllabic intensity of dueling Soho street poets with bellies full of hi-test coffee.

A male voice steps to the fore on “We Have Not Yet Learned the New Songs,” and the arrival of Aaron Meicht’s valve splatter in “I Didn’t Really Prepare for This but Probably” widens the avant-jazz angle. Meanwhile, the rhythm section remains firmly in a post-No Wave/ noise rock mode, although there is some swell Fire Music-style drumming in “First Comes the Scattering.”

Unlike a fair amount of noise and improv, there is essentially nothing spontaneous going on here. The skronked-out foundation and the interweaving recitations, which are quite conversational and at times darkly, artily humorous, underline the shaping hands of Feely and Just, their shared creative vision only magnified in the shorter, more restrained section “Like War Strategies.”

It connects the lengthier servings of “First Comes the Scattering” and “Drowning in Isolation and Provincialism,” the latter loaded with potent ripples of amp-wrangle and in the late portion sustained drum-team thunder. “There Was No Event at All” brings talking and calm; with it comes a deepening ambiance of the art-space, the musicianship in this sequence assisting in illuminating the advocacy of the esteemed avant-gardist Robert Ashley.

In “How Did the Election Go?” the subject of commemoration comes into vivid focus. It’s also downright witty, and if the title conjures thoughts of November the last, keep in mind this was recorded in 2015. Still, it’s difficult to deny the uncompromising art blare and soul purge throughout “It Could Lead to a Transformation” fits our current moment to a T.

Even more so in the closing piece “It is Everywhere, it is Within,” a male voice uttering “the current government is unbelievable, they are just extremely shameless...these guys are just boasting about the terrible fucking things they’ve done.” Object Collection explores how momentous past events get shaped to meet current needs, but the artistic convulsiveness of *cheap&easy* OCTOBER applies equally to our tumultuous present.

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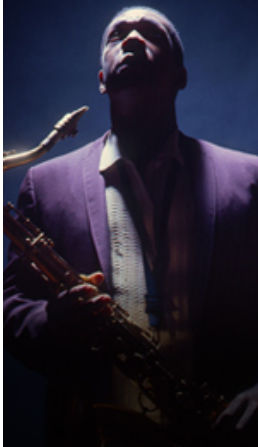
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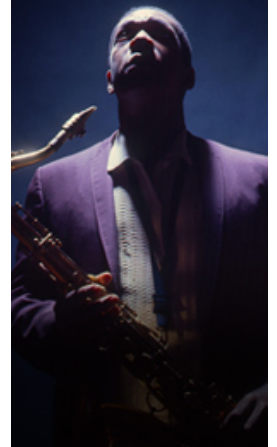
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**Mtnchippewa** — God Bless

Kevin for making it to the 10,000th time an

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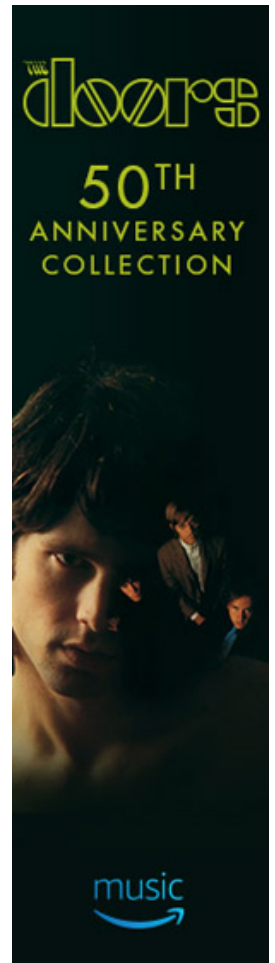
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**Chris** — I appreciate the presence of so much Dunedin sound on these

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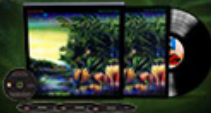


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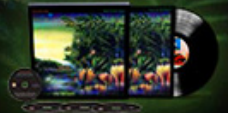
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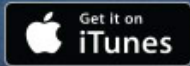
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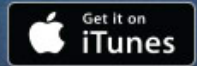
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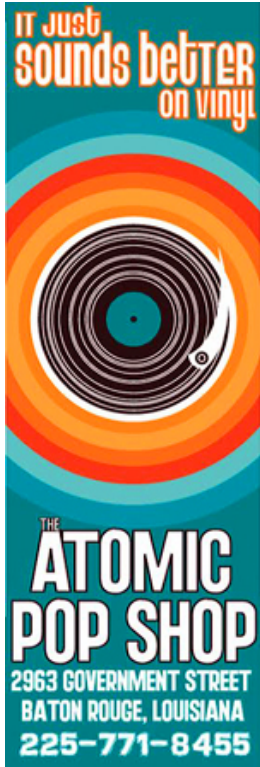
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