

MSJ

*Apparent Horizon* © (p) Maggi Payne: Artistic concept

For quite some time I have been interested in transforming "natural sounds" into sounds which no longer can be identified with their origin. In *Apparent Horizon* I decided to take sounds emitted by human endeavor and put them back in touch with nature. I used sound source transmissions from/through space such as NASA Space Shuttle and Apollo mission communications, satellite transmissions and shortwave broadcasts. I often chose sections that were extremely noisy, full of static, distortion: reaching the point of unintelligibility. These are the most fascinating areas for me—when communication breaks down and only the artifacts of the communication technology itself, not the "information" it is supposed to convey, come to the forefront. For me, aurally these artifacts are far more interesting and "information-full" than the words that were intended to be conveyed (we've heard so many words in our lifetimes that they can become meaningless).

In *Apparent Horizon*, I transformed these artifacts of human communications into natural sounds, thus we hear static "rain," distortion "wind," Morse Code "crickets" in various sections of this piece. The effort is to transform this desperate need for and overabundance of aural communication that humans produce into nature or into sounds that re-create in my mind the sensation of being in the isolated desert locations which are the subject of the video aspect of this work.

Technical requirements:

DAT machine, mixer, amp, speaker system.

Since there is a video component to this work, it would be highly desirable to play the video, in which case a NTSC S-VHS video deck and video projection system would be preferable. It would also be best to loose-sync the DAT audio with the video, which is a very simple process, since the quality is far superior to the VHS Hi-Fi audio tracks.

The video runs 12:12.

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*Apparent Horizon* © (p)1996 Maggi Payne: Program notes, technical resources

I started gathering the video images for *Apparent Horizon* six years prior to its completion. My original intent was to slowly reveal information in various landscapes by holding still on an image for several seconds, then zooming in or out or panning to reveal more detail, an unusual vista, rock formation, etc.. It occurred to me that it also might be interesting to see what might be "revealed" from an overhead view. Since it was impractical to rent airplanes for this purpose, I decided to incorporate NASA footage taken by the Space Shuttle and Apollo series astronauts. It is at times difficult to distinguish earth views from space from those taken on the earth's surface.

Many of the earthbound shots are of rather "alien" landscapes — those where I, as a human being, don't really fit in — I'm the alien here. In these often desolate places the only sounds one hears are wind, insects, a scant number of birds and animals and a rare rainstorm. I decided to take our constant human chatter and transpose it into sounds somewhat reminiscent of nature's sounds in the landscapes to which they are attached or to transform them into somewhat "otherworldly" sounds. This was an attempt to convey an aural impression of the sensations I have experienced while in these earthbound landscapes and those sensations I imagine the astronauts might experience while viewing the earth from space. Sound sources consisted of transmissions from/through space and were from Space Shuttle and Apollo missions, satellite transmissions, and shortwave radio broadcasts. Often I chose sections that were full of static and distortion — signals which were reaching unintelligibility. There are Morse Code "crickets" at Bryce Canyon and static "rain" at the Canyonlands. Processing includes heavy equalization, convolving, extreme sample rate conversions and time compression/expansion. This is the third piece in a series of pieces which are based on transformations of human-made or generated sounds, the previous two being *Airwaves (realities)* and *Liquid Metal*.

*(Equipment used includes: Sonic Solutions digital audio workstation, Roland S-770 sampler, SoundHack, Opcode Vision, Lexicon PCM 80 DEP, Yamaha DX-7 (MIDI controller) satellite feed from KSFO/KYA radio station during space shuttle mission to retrieve satellite, shortwave radio, NASA footage and audio from Space Shuttle and Apollo missions, Hi-8 desert/fog images.)*