

NAV

John Duncan • Francisco López

Entry no. M-377

Concept summary

John Duncan and Francisco López propose to create a new collaborative electroacoustic work that combines the unique approaches to sound of two outstanding artists to create a synthesis that is greater than the individual components. The goal is to create a non-associative audio environment that is monumental yet intimate in scale. Multi-channel audio spatialization and dramatically minimal lighting conditions render the space both immense and intimate, from one extreme to the other from one moment to the next, involving the audience in a sensual experience that is both private and public.

Both artists are known for performing in total darkness. For Duncan, this absence of visual stimuli is effective --in fact essential-- to eliminate as many peripheral distractions as possible, and to focus the listener's attention on internal, psychic responses to the sound. For López, darkness serves to focus audience attention entirely on the sound itself, and on the environment that it creates.

Francisco López:

From my perspective, "NAV" aims to be a piece of absolute music, i.e., a soundwork devoid of any procedural, structural or relational elements such as those abounding in most music (classical and modern, mainstream and avant garde). As I see it, these elements dissipate the possibilities of sound by itself with the burdens of symbolism, language, rationalism, functionalism and the like. In deep contrast to the -now classical- avant garde structural openness, I propose an openness of content through a transcendental immersion in the sound matter.

John Duncan:

My art is about asking questions. "NAV" is one way to do this. The work is in three sections, each with a basic 'theme': enticement, introspection, synthesis. The first is a kind of seduction that begins with single, almost inaudible sounds that focus me, to concentrate on each new change and to expect more. These develop into a 'field', then change abruptly into another, then change back again, etc., and my expectations to hear the organization in the work are satisfied in a way that's intriguing. The second begins with a sound that's immediately identifiable --breath-- and I find myself breathing with it. As I'm doing this I hear something else, something non-human, that is subtle at first then takes over and morphs into an audio field that focuses my attention on my own internal processes and thoughts. The third is a synthesis of external and internal, an evolving spatial intimacy that renders such separations irrelevant.

The thing I'm looking for in all the art I make is to learn, to discover everything I can about what it is to be alive. In our time science and psychology are accepted frames for explaining the findings, and in that sense they're "trusted" as a religion is "trusted". It's also clear, to scientists among others, that there is infinite knowledge and experience that these disciplines can't even begin to explain. Putting faith in anything to provide all answers to all questions is a howling, tragic mistake. I'm interested in the entire process.

The intention is to develop a sensual and non-associative auditory experience that encourages self-examination in the listener.

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Project Recording

General Description

For this project, each of the artists gave audio sources and sourcefiles to the other, for use in processing and composing individually in their own studios in Italy (Duncan) and Spain (Lopez). The modifications to these files were then recorded on CD-R format and traded through the mail. The final mix was recorded in Duncan's studio, mastered with a high-end audio D-A/A-D conversion process for added depth and resonance.

Technical Summary

John Duncan

Audio sources: Shortwave source recordings (DAT) made in Thailand.

Processing and editing:

Hardware:

Macintosh 6100/66 Power PC with 32 Mb RAM, running System 7.5.5
Audio Media II card installed
1 Gb external hard disk

Software:

Sound Designer II 2.8.2
Protools 3.2
SoundHack 0880
TimeBandit 2.5.2

Mastering:

DAT recording and playback:

Sony DTC 690
TEAC Tascam DA20-MK2

D-A Conversion:

Audio Note DAC-2

A-D Conversion:

Sony Super-bitmapping 20-bit

Francisco López

Audio sources: "Untitled" 81 - 87.

Processing and editing:

Hardware:

Yamaha 4-track portastudio
Boss GE215 EQ
Yamaha SPX 50
Korg A3
Philips DAT 850 DAT recorder
Sony TCD D7 DAT recorder
Marantz CD-R 630

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Performance Installation

General Description

John Duncan and Francisco López will perform a multi-channel version of NAV in a live event that will emphasize a dynamic spatialization of composed and improvised sound. The event will be held in a cavernous, completely dark environment that focuses the audience's attention entirely on the movement and sensual richness of the audio events.

Technical Summary

Preferred location: Flämmereihalle, Vöest Alpine Steelmill
Preferred start times: 30 minutes after sunset (dusk)/ midnight
Duration: approximately 60 minutes

Audio system:

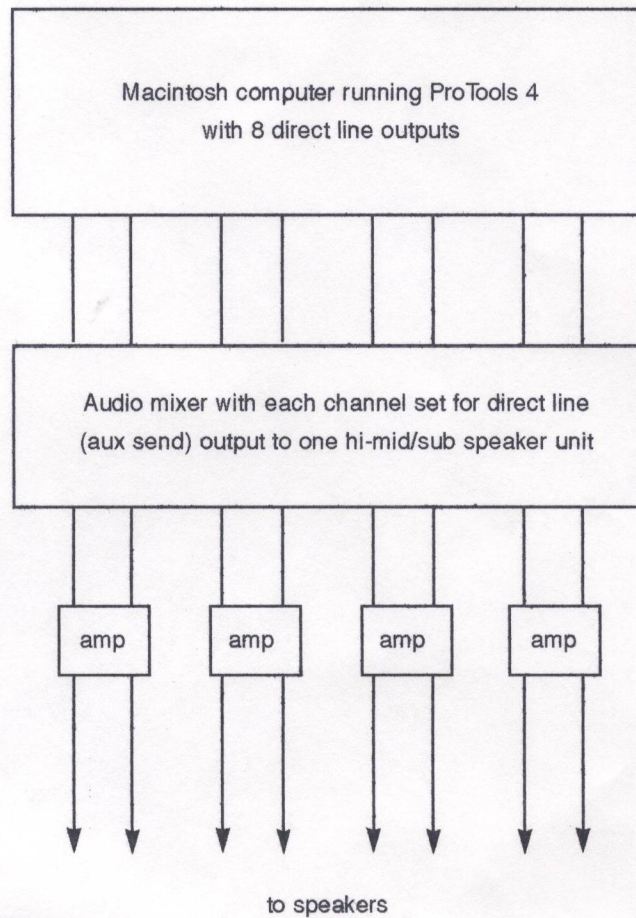
1x Macintosh computer running ProTools 4 with 8 direct channel outputs
2x CD players (for backup)
1x 12-channel mixing desk with AUX SEND outputs per channel
4x 2 channel P.A. with minimum 2000W per channel
Placement: on a 2-meter high elevated platform set at the center of the event space.

8x high-midrange speaker cabinets
8x subwoofer speaker cabinets
Placement: at even distances along opposite walls of the event space.
High-midrange speaker cabinets mounted one meter above subwoofers.

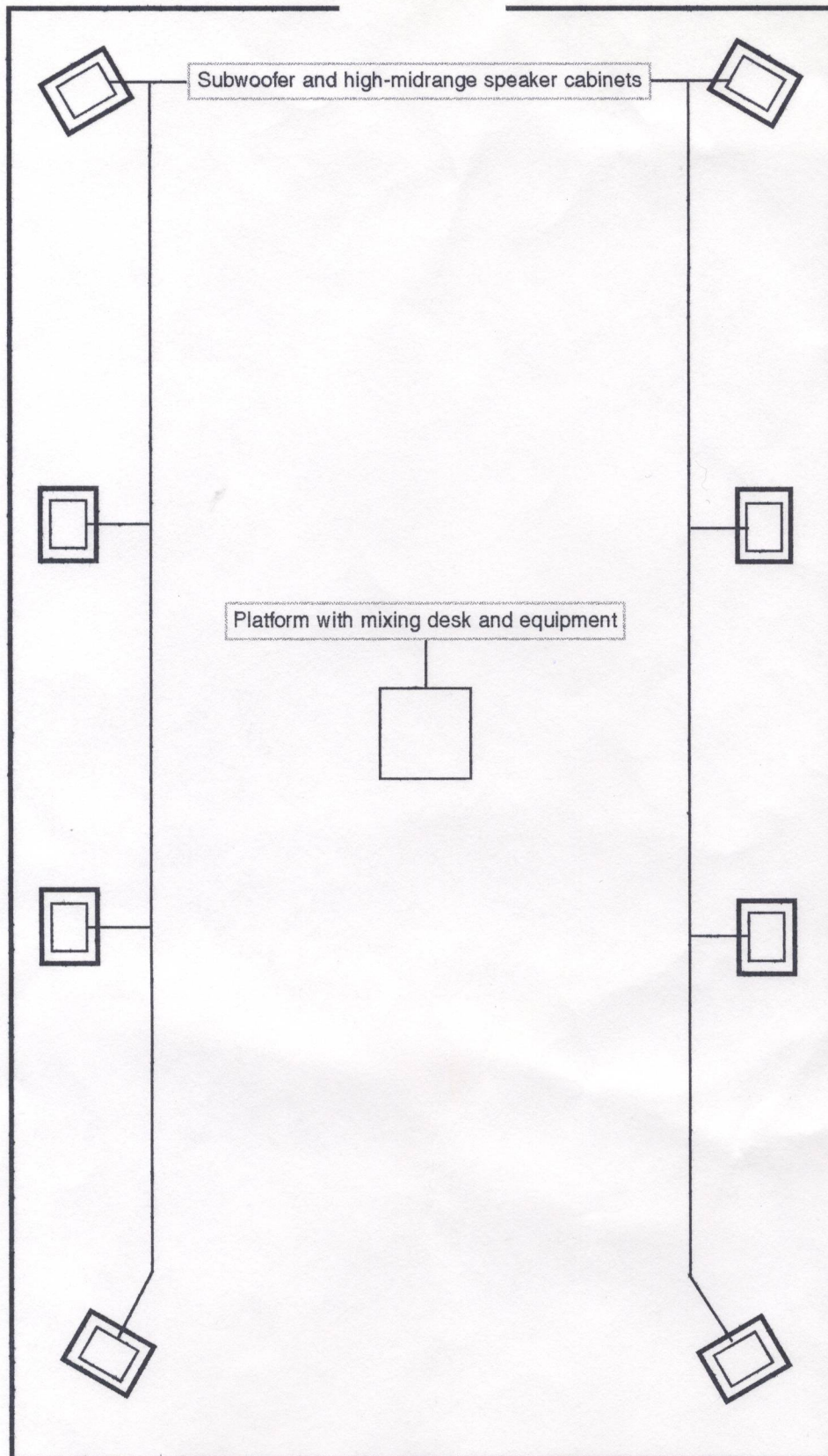
Lighting:

Emergency floor lights with blue-violet filters, set at minimum intensity.
ALL other interior and exterior lights OFF.
It is essential to the performance to have as little light as possible in the overall performance space, especially in audience areas -- the complete elimination of ALL LIGHT is preferred, if possible. The artists are aware of and are willing to comply with necessary audience safety regulations. At the same time, success of the performance in large part depends on strictly rendering the entire space as dark as possible.

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Onsite equipment schematic



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Onsite equipment configuration
not to scale



Flämmereihalle
Vöest Alpine Steelworks