

Preview

**Composer Mark Fell to present
"ambisonic work" at the Transformer Station**

by Mike Telin



"I became interested in electronic music around the age of thirteen," recalls Sheffield (UK) based multidisciplinary artist [Mark Fell](#). "At the time there was a movement in England called *new romantics*, which was kind of like synthpop with groups like the *Human League* and *Soft Cell*."

On Wednesday, November 13 beginning at 7:30 pm, CMA Concerts at Transformer Station presents Mark Fell in what he calls an "am-bisonic" work that uses thirty-two channels of

analogue synthesis that goes from the border of silence to the other extreme. "It's an immersive experience, but I'm struggling to think of a name for it," he told us by telephone from [EMPAC at Rensselaer](#) in Troy, New York.

Fell, who is known for combining popular music styles with computer-based compositions — with a particular emphasis on algorithmic and mathematical systems — says he developed the concept for the piece this past summer in Stockholm. "The studio I was working in had these big analogue modular synthesizers and what I did was to record a lot of very basic tonal material from the static oscillators, lots of variations of this very simple thing. The piece that I am doing in Cleveland uses thirty-two of these oscillators."

What will audiences experience at Wednesday's performance? "If you can, imagine a hypothetical sphere with your head in the middle. Throughout the performance I'll introduce these oscillations at different points around the sphere. The piece begins very quietly and builds to quite a loud sound but nothing painful or damaging, [laughs] I don't like pain or damage. I like sound to be immersive and full but I don't like to experience pain with my music."

Fell says that although the work feels loud because of its spectral richness, once the music stops, it stops. "You go to some concerts and afterwards your ears are ringing. And a test of how loud something is, is are your ears ringing? If they are not, then it wasn't actually that loud." He also points out that symphony orchestras are also very loud. "In theory, a trumpet can produce volumes that are illegal and that you wouldn't be permitted to do if you had an electronic device."

Fell tells me that earlier in his career he did tend to get carried away with volume. “You push things too much, but with experience you become a lot more confident about where to stop.” He says the piece does have a tranquil and meditative quality and hopefully the audience will be able to be seated on the floor if they choose. “I like the idea of the floor because it frames it as a slightly new-age type of thing. But if people want to wander around that is fine, they can do whatever they like.” Following the performance Fell hopes to talk to as many people as possible, “If you are unhappy or you liked it, or just have any questions, please come up and talk after the show. Don’t feel like you need to have something amazing to say, it’s just always nice to meet people.”

At the end of our conversation I’m still troubled that such an interesting piece has no name, so I suggest an audience contest. Fell laughs. “That is a good idea, but I’d probably get a lot of unpleasant names.”

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