EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

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Why combine the immediate experience of listening with the reflexivity of written analysis? The very merger suggests a kind of paradox, caught somewhere in the ether between now and then, between the immediacy of listening in the moment and our belated attempts to put that experience into words. If our aim is to capture, expound or understand a musical experience using words, the paradox itself will ensure our failure and disappointment. But what if success is not our concern? What if our interest is not the end, but rather the means themselves? What if our failure is understood as the means—our prima facie starting point—which we set out from precisely to encounter that ill-fated attempt? Merging listening and writing is a process that emphasizes the inability to resolve these two domains of our experience and the necessary detours we traverse along the way: a never-ending course of creative destruction which dissects, topples and rewrites the temporal categories of human thought. No paradox could be more encompassing. In our seemingly vain efforts, we swim in that absurd marriage of reflexivity and experience, destruction and creation, and the very puzzle of our humanity.

Writing about music attempts to bring us closer to some essence of human experience—in this case, the inscrutable “sound” as a physical vibration existing in the immediate abstract, isolated from the implications of organized language—while simultaneously allowing human rationality to appropriate the abstract, detach it from, and largely replace the immediate experience itself. For is that not what writing, talking or reading about music does? Rather than take the musical experience within the contained terms of its language, for its word, we attempt it with a foreign language which, in our inevitable failure, replaces it with the new language—indeed, a new experience—entirely.

So then what? Is the written word to be one of music’s greatest rivals? Only if we believe one must succeed at the expense of the other. But
once one has experienced music as music, does one’s ability to experience it as a semantic, dialogical experience necessarily diminish? Conversely, does reading or writing about one’s experience with music jeopardize one’s receptiveness to the music in-and-of-itself, in its “purest” form? Or rather do both take turns in the spotlight, conquering ground in a seemingly endless war of cerebral activity until, at long last, the source sound rests, and new stimuli—perhaps through neural networks previously undiscovered—become sought elsewhere?

The purpose of this journal is to provide the battleground and the stage for this dialectical experience. On one hand we provide a platform for authors to present their unique ideas on music and sound and contrast them, whenever applicable, with a link to the audio itself. At the same time we encourage “writing about writing about” music as its own unique exercise wherein, like two negatives multiplied, we suddenly find ourselves in a positive paradigm of the written word taking on an almost “musical” or “artistic” quality.

Whether musing on the “oddities” of St. Vincent and David Byrne; questioning the nature of silence and sound in John Cage; unveiling the infectious rap heartbreak of Childish Gambino; or curiously venturing into a sound exhibition at UTM’s Blackwood Gallery—we hope this inaugural issue inspires you to capture your own musical experience in words, and reflect on the future of sound and music listening.

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We hope you enjoy reading—and listening to—soundposts.