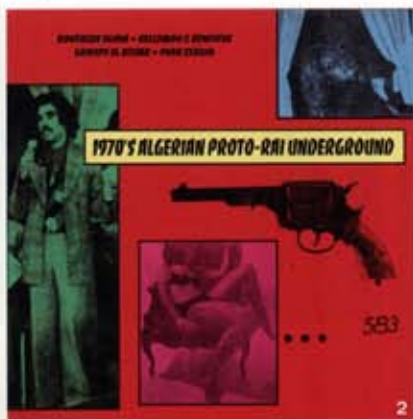


# Damon Krukowski

DAMON KRUKOWSKI, A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO ARTFORUM, IS ONE HALF OF DAMON & NAOMI, WHOSE SEVENTH ALBUM, *WITHIN THESE WALLS*, WAS RELEASED IN 2007. THE GROUP'S 1992 DEBUT ALBUM, *MORE SAD HITS*, WAS REISSUED THIS PAST SUMMER.



**1** Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt, *Oblique Strategies* Eno and Schmidt's set of instructional cards for solving creative problems—originally printed in 1975—is now available as an iPhone application. Instead of checking messages, you can draw one of its “worthwhile dilemmas” to direct your next move, such as: “Fill every beat with something.”

**2** *1970's Algerian Proto-Rai Underground* (Sublime Frequencies) In the pre-synthesizer days of rai music explored by this album, every beat was filled with driving hand percussion, passionate call-and-response vocals, and (surprisingly) trumpets. The lyrics aren't translated, but titles such as “He, Who Doesn't Own a Car” and “I'm Still Getting Drunk . . . Still” tell you everything you need to know.

**3** *Give Me Love: Songs of the Broken-hearted—Baghdad, 1925–1929* (Honest Jon's) An elegy for a cosmopolitan culture lost to generations of ethnic conflict. As the introductory notes explain, “By the time the Jews left en masse in the early 1950s, there was a gap in Baghdad for instrumentalists who could play Iraqi music.” That music turns out to have been part Jewish, part Egyptian, part Indian, part Turkish—and all melancholy.

**4** Mutant Sounds (<http://mutant-sounds.blogspot.com>) If music blogs are the new radio, Mutant Sounds is a pirate station that broadcasts noise obscurities by and for freaks. Lately they've been on an '80s cassette kick; I've enjoyed the titles and artwork for recordings like Deus Ex Machina's *SAD* and Magic's *Marionette Karma* so much that I dare not listen, for fear of ruining the dream of how they might sound.

**5** *The Music Tapes, Music Tapes for Clouds and Tornadoes* (Merge Records) Billed as the Music Tapes' first release since 1999's *1st Imaginary Symphony for Nomad*, this album sounds more like it was recorded fifty years ago. Turns out that bandleader Julian Koster used a '30s wire recorder to capture this ghostly, funny, melodic-yet-atonal pop opera.

**2.** Cover of *1970's Algerian Proto-Rai Underground* (Sublime Frequencies, 2008). **6.** Conlon Nancarrow in his home, Mexico City, 1990. Photo: John Fago. **7.** Helena Espvall and Masaki Batoh, Tokyo, 2008. Photo: Minoru Tsuyuki. **8.** *Primary Information, How to Make a Happening for 100 Radios*, 2008. Installation view, Maccarone, New York. Photo: Damien Crisp.

**6** Conlon Nancarrow, *Studies for Player Piano* (Other Minds) Nancarrow (1927–1997) created these compositions—newly available in a remastered four-CD set—by hand-punching the paper rolls for player pianos. The more holes, the less space in the music. The most spectacular examples employ a density and speed that no human player could achieve.

**7** *Helena Espvall & Masaki Batoh* (*Drag City*) A stylistic and linguistic surprise from two experimental rock musicians—one based in Philadelphia and the other in Tokyo—this album consists almost entirely of traditional folk songs, sung in cellist Espvall's native Swedish. When Batoh (leader of the psychedelic band Ghost) chimes in with vocal harmonies, these recordings reach a kind of pan-national hippie ideal.

**8** Allan Kaprow, *How to Make a Happening* (Primary Information) This year Kaprow's 1966 instructional LP was reissued for the first time by the excellent new publishing house Primary Information. Kaprow's Fluxus infomercial sounds dated to my ears, but when I play it for my students, they immediately start making music together.

**9** Electric Africa Record collectors have flooded into Africa, and the result has been some dazzling new CD compilations documenting the sounds of postindependence electric music in Nigeria (*Nigeria Special*, Soundway), the Congo (*Rumba Rock*, African Pearls), and Benin and Togo (*African Scream Contest*, Analog Africa), to name just three of my favorites. The era of cheap global travel may be drawing to a close, but crate-diggers have already made the most of it.

**10** Brian Eno and Peter Chilvers, *Bloom* (Opal Limited) Another interactive iPhone application for Eno. (Has he found his new medium?) Thirty years after the landmark *Music for Airports*, Eno has again written an ambient piece for a locus of both high-speed communication and aimless drift: the cell phone. *Bloom*, which Eno describes as a “music box for the 21st century,” embraces that drift and makes it beautiful. □