

## Mp3 Anarchestra - 4/04+



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Experimental music on experiment instruments. More odd than loud more frozen than arty. 19 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Free Jazz, Worldwide World Traditions 4/04+ Songs Details: 4/04+ is a group of studies (subtitled disturbed jazz), recorded by Alex Ferris in April, 2004 and a section from an abandoned work recorded the previous August. All the instruments were built and played by Alex Ferris. (From the anarchestra website [anarchestra.net](http://anarchestra.net)) When I was growing up (1960's) music was, except in rare circumstances, made by players of instruments. This connection is imprinted on me. I hear a musical sound and imagine / assume a physical act producing it (even when there isn't / wasn't one). For someone younger than me this probably isn't true. In the eighties I began to realize that most people thought music was something that came out of little boxes. This detachment from the idea that making music involves playing instruments comes in part from synthesizers, but also from the boredom (been there, heard that) people felt about being endlessly presented with the same combinations of the same instruments (the same boredom that killed jazz for many a generation earlier). O boy! A guitar solo! In addition to new sounds, instrument building encourages different ergonomic approaches. Saxophones, pianos, and drumsets are wonderful feats of engineering, but a lot of thinking about instruments seems to have stopped with them (drumsets are still evolving). The physical skills required for traditional instruments (mostly involving finger dexterity) alienate some people from learning to play. They also tend to encourage a similarity of approach to the ideas of music on the simplest level, i.e., music tends to be decorative because we use our fingers for fine work, thus fine workers end up playing (and writing) all our music. Instruments that encourage facility tend to encourage embellishment at the expense of function. Skill at embellishment is then equated with musicianship (i.e., Bud Powell is a better pianist than Thelonious Monk or Steve Vai is a better guitarist than D. Boon, whatever). This encourages young

musicians to aspire toward the decorative and to ignore the functional. This in turn makes functional innovation rare and often misunderstood. To a certain extent the traditional instruments have tended to move music away from the physical and toward the cerebral, the mechanics have largely defined the aesthetics. To grow in new directions aesthetically, it may prove fruitful to look in new mechanical directions as well (the same old physical actions will produce the same old musical constructs). Part of my thinking in this has been to make instruments that don't encourage speed, that add labor to playing instead of saving it, that encourage functionality at the expense of decoration. There are two benefits to this: one is that people with different sorts of physical bias aren't put in a position to fail; the other is that musicians with traditional skills are encouraged to make more rigorous (i.e., functional) choices about what they play -this encourages closer listening and more compositional and conceptual involvement. To refresh music, we need to develop new functional approaches more than we need to redecorate old ones. One of the reasons 'classical' music stopped evolving sonically (besides the codification of the orchestra) was that its players were limited in the available ranges of motion. Jazz (with very similar instruments) allowed different motions, encouraged different techniques of playing, and made new sounds. "A living mind is in a continual state of change. While rigid opinions are useful as temporary tools for the sake of verbal clarity in argument --even argument with oneself-- a tool is only as useful as its aptness to its purpose." -Alex Ferris 2004

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