PRIMAL LANDSCAPES

for Electric Indian Flute and computer

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Primal Landscapes uses as its sound sources for the computer the acoustic indian flute. Almost all of the sounds for the computer are derived from samples of this instrument.
These sounds are re-synthesized as computer wavetables for the K2000sr sampler and used as sources for designing new sounds in the V.A.S.T. sound-design-system that is part of this computer voice module. The modified sounds are intended to suggest a primordial but nondescript point in time hardwired in all of us but suppressed by us all in our collective attempt to be orderly and controlling. It is an effort to touch that part of us that is minus the petty protocols that govern our lives and find that spot that is honest and truly feeling. The work recalls such unspoken moments in our hardwired prehistory where preverbal, primitive feelings as children who are yet too young to speak think only with visual images. This is a time and skill lost by most of us to the cognitive, thoughtful and often so-called adult stage of development.

The flute is a handmade Native-American Indian Flute and its sound is fragile and delicate. As a windplayer (clarinet and other traditional wind instruments) I did not want to study techniques and recordings of traditional American Indian techniques because I did not want to limit the potential of the instrument to these cultural standards. Instead, I explored the potential of the instrument simply by starting to play it, discovering a wealth of sounds of articulations foreign to western wind performance. I then listened to traditional American Indian recordings and noticed that only some of the articulations that I discovered were used in this literature, but these new techniques suited my needs to conjure primordial images.

The flute is fitted with a wireless microphone placed near the blowhole. This retains the breathy sound that is so characteristic of the instrument. Two methods of performance are possible:

1. The microphone is placed into a pitch-to-MIDI converter to allow the wind sound to act as a computer controller. In this environment the entrances of the re-synthesized flute sounds are controlled directly by the real-time flute.
2. The re-synthesized flute sounds are controlled from a small notebook computer and the real-time flute plays in response to how the computer aligns their performance.
3. A Digital Audio Tape is made of a computer alignment of the re-synthesized flute sounds and played back in performance with the real-time flute. This is essentially a performance controlled by the computer that is captured by the recording.

The sound of the real-time flute is also placed into a digital effects processor to modify the sound of the instrument as it is performed. Different effects are selected with a manual footswitch or controlled by a computer program and parameters internal to the effects are modified by computer program or controlled manually with a MDI footpedal during the performance.