



Avanto uncovers the underground **A festival of experimental music and film in Helsinki, 17–19 November 2006**

This November Helsinki's Avanto Festival, the largest annual event in the Nordic countries dedicated to experimental music and film, once again looks to expose festivalgoers to the latest, strangest and most innovative elements in sound and cinema. The seventh edition of the festival presents a diverse collection of music, moving image and installations. Highlights of this year's line-up include **Sähkömetsä** ("Electric Forest"), a survey of the forgotten history of Finnish experimental filmmaking, and three generations of the New York avant-garde. Headlining the festival is **Tony Conrad**, a pioneer of experimental music and cinema. From New York's second great wave of experimentalism, the Sonic Youth guitarist **Lee Ranaldo** and the visual artist **Leah Singer** will combine sound, word and image in a live performance. Representing the latest generation of New York's noise music underground will be **Carlos Giffoni**, **Prurient** and **Black Dice**, a group out of Brooklyn that in recent years has worked to bridge the gap between experimental music and wider audiences.

Sähkömetsä's five programmes of short films consist of extremely rare cinematic gems. Finnish underground films from the 1960s teem with that era's sexual liberation and psychedelic mindscapes, while **Pasi "Sleeping" Myllymäki's** frenzied 8 mm shorts bring the punk years of the 1970s back to life. **Sähkömetsä** proves media art is not a recent invention or a phenomenon exclusive to the 21st century, but is, also in Finland, firmly rooted in a tradition of experimental filmmaking.

New York comes to Finland over the festival weekend, as Avanto presents a group of the American metropolis's most prominent avant-garde artists. **Tony Conrad** (1940–) participated in two of 1960s New York's most vital contributions to experimental music. The composer and violinist helped birth minimalist music in New York and he was also there for the beginning of the **Velvet Underground**. Conrad opens Avanto's music programme with a concert of his hypnotic drones, while the weekend screenings include three programmes of his films, each one a classic of abstract film art. As a member of Sonic Youth and in his solo projects, the guitarist **Lee Ranaldo** (1956–) has long worked to break boundaries between expressive mediums, and his work with the visual artist **Leah Singer** is no exception. Working with music and poems from Ranaldo and images from Singer on two 16mm film projectors, the pair will present *Drift* for Avanto's audience. *Drift* is an existential essay that communicates as improvised concert, spoken word performance and experimental cinema. When **Prurient**, aka Dominick Fernow (1981–), and **Carlos Giffoni** (1978–) take the stage, they will show why they are central figures in New York's current noise underground. Brooklyn's **Black Dice** have made their name over the past few years by bringing leftfield elements of musique concrète and noise to fans of electronica and alternative rock.

Avanto has always highlighted Finland's musical diversity, and the 2006 line-up sharpens that focus. The Finnish experimental scene is currently surging with fresh creativity, achieving much deserved international recognition along the way. This year six Finnish artists and groups will perform. Away from the spotlight of publicity, all six have been cultivating idiosyncratic and innovative approaches to making music, while at the same time building tight-knit networks of fellow travellers. Their sounds and approaches may differ, but they all share a joyful disregard for genre boundaries. The Avanto line-up features **Islaja's** battered psychedelic folk-rock poetics, the duo **Pymathon's** cyclone of speed metal and improvisation, **Lau Nau's** fragile songscapes, minimalist music performed by the **Hei** collective and **Tomutonttu's** colourful collages of noise. In addition, Timo Kaukolampi, of the Op:l Bastards and



Larry and the Lefthanded fame, will debut his new project, **Kaukolampi, Puranen & Nykänen**.

For the first time Avanto has commissioned original works, both of which will debut at this year's festival. The two compositions by the American musical polymath **Jim O'Rourke** and the German composer **Ralf Wehowsky** will resurrect the nearly extinct tradition of tape music concerts that began with electronic music in the 1950s. No performers will take the stage, only the sound reproduction equipment. Following the tape concert, the British improvisers **Mark Wastell** and **Rhodri Davies** will investigate the limits of audibility with their brand of ultra-quiet improvisation.

Sound artist **Gert-Jan Prins** and media artist **Bas van Koolwijk**, a duo from the Netherlands, present their latest work, *Synchronator*. Using self-built electronic devices, the duo questions the technical limitations of video and sound signals, seeking to return to machines their "natural" voice. The Scandinavian supergroup **Nash Kontroll** sees limitations as something to smash, and this year's Avanto presents the rare chance to hear them do it live. The trio (**Dror Feiler**, **Mats Gustafsson** and **Lasse Marhaug**) erase with impunity the borders between improvisation, noise and electro-acoustic experimentation. Their debut album *Your Left Hand Just Exploded* (2005) has garnered critical acclaim the world over.

Among of the highlights of this year's film programme is the retrospective of twelve films by **Frédérique Devaux**, one of the best-known names in the field of lettrist cinema. *The Piano Tuner of Earthquakes*, the long-awaited second feature film by **Timothy** and **Stephen Quay**, receives its Finnish premiere in Avanto. *The Phantom of the Operator*, the debut feature film by the Montreal-based filmmaker **Caroline Martel**, explores the much heard but rarely seen world of American telephone switchboard operators from 1903 to 1989. **Nikolas Geyrhalter's** *Our Daily Bread* exposes how the food we eat ends up on our dinner tables. In what is one of the most important and unsettling documentary films made in recent years, Geyrhalter takes us to the sources of modern-day industrial food production. The yearly *Avantoscope* programme, now a well-established Avanto tradition, continues Avanto's mission of showcasing the latest developments in experimental film and video art from around the world.

Film and sound installations round out Avanto's programme. Audiences can participate in **Zoë Irvine's** *Magnetic Migration Music*, a found sound project that collects and listens to audiocassette fragments found in the environment. **Luke Fowler's** film *Pilgrimage from Scattered Points* – screened last summer at Tate Britain – is a subjective documentary film on Cornelius Cardew (1936–81), one of the leading champions of contemporary music in Great Britain. In addition to **Frédérique Devaux's** film retrospective, Avanto also has the pleasure of introducing her installation of solitary 16 mm film frames.

Avanto will take place in Helsinki at the Kiasma Theatre, Cinema Orion, Sibelius Academy, Kuudes linja, Gloria, MUU gallery and Gallery Huuto. Ticket sales start on 1 November.

The entire programme is available at www.avantofestival.com.

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