

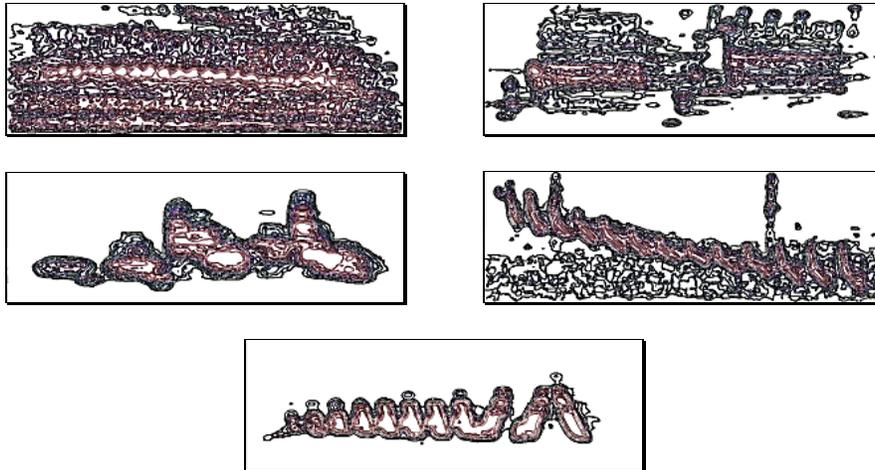
HighBirds (Prime)
(in memoriam Iannis Xenakis)

This is the second of the *Directional Birds* series; the first was *LowBirds* (1999). Each composition is based on or inspired by birdcalls, and each is approximately 14 minutes long.

HB(P) began as a simple electric guitar duet, but with the death of Iannis Xenakis, it changed character completely. I discarded what I had been working on—a through-composed ‘dot music’ piece—and turned instead to five bird calls to use as sonic maps of color, pitch, and density.

I spent considerable time choosing and studying the bird calls (killdeer, thrush, redwing, song sparrow, white-throat sparrow), selected for their differences of character. Then I extracted their spectra, and used the spectral images to build a musical alphabet.

The original calls were then set aside, and the extracted spectral images were transformed several times. The results are almost organic:



The final image transformations were chosen for color and outline clarity, and each was linearly mapped to a digital soundfile. These soundfiles—from the spectral rather than frequency domain—were used for further transformations and as the basis of a deep layering (the architecture itself drawn from the sparrow map).

To create the guitar parts, I selected five of the original multi-color transformations, drew multiple channels of Midi information from them, translated the results into notation, and worked the notation for shape, color, and dynamics (rather than pitch—thus maintaining the architectural, rather than tonal, core of the composition). To emphasize the architecture, specific noteheads were removed, leaving the contours in accidentals, stems and beams.

The final steps of composition involved bringing together the soundfile layers and guitar parts into a coherent and musical whole. (A spectral re-analysis of the final composition is a revelation of unconscious coherency.)

Dennis Báthory-Kitsz, February 9, 2001

Recording/spectral analysis: Cool Edit 2000
Image transformations: Paint Shop Pro 7
Image-to-sound mapping: The Voice 1.44
Soundfile layering: AudioMulch 0.9
Soundfile multitracking: Cakewalk 9.03
Image-to-Midi mapping: Loxound Pixilator 1.2.2
Midi-to-notation conversion: Finale 2000

