



Artist: Various
Album: Birmingham Sound Matter
Cat no: AB023
Date: 27th July 2009

Birmingham Sound Matter - Scylla Magda – Project Coordinator (Modulate)

Francisco López was first invited to Birmingham in 2007, to give one of his legendary 'Total Darkness' concerts at a Modulate Sonic Culture Salon, and we were delighted when he subsequently suggested returning to direct the Birmingham Sound Matter project. López thus became the catalyst to draw together a unique mix of sound artists from the West Midlands: some of whom were born here (in Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country), others who gravitated to the region from London, Dublin and the Shetland Islands, and ranging from the self-taught to the academically trained, all with a deep interest in sound. This, combined with the spark of López's passion and dedication, has produced a concert performance and the Birmingham Sound Matter CD – a project with which Modulate are proud to have been involved.

Birmingham Sound Matter - Francisco López – Project Director

Typically, recorded sound is considered as a representation of reality. Unbeknown to the average person – but also to a vast majority of sound professionals and composers – a sound recording can also be considered as an entity by itself. Or, to be more precise, an 'objet sonore' as Pierre Schaeffer aptly described it more than half a century ago. This is what makes Birmingham Sound Matter a project about Birmingham in the most significant sense of the term. Not as a poor and biased representation of the place but instead as a creative exploration of a sonic substance that came originally from this city and was then freely employed to create the sound pieces on this CD.

In addition to this, what I proposed to the participant artists was to set up a form of collective creation that precisely addressed the phenomenological features of this sonic substance, as well as those of each creative mind or spirit involved. We created a shared pool of recordings done in the city and then proceeded to transform this original sound matter through successive processes, thus creating two new shared pools of transformed materials. These were the basis of all the final compositions. This is a strategy that divides the creative process between the individual and the collective, in which both levels integrate and merge in an interesting way. Each one of the pieces created for this CD is the result of an extensive process of mutation, transformation, development and reconfiguration.

In my view, the results of this project are as much about Birmingham as about the participants themselves. Which, in the end, cannot be otherwise, no matter what extractions from reality we take, and regardless on how we take them. While millions of people today constantly gather fixed extractions of reality (in the form of photographs or video or sounds) with the specific purpose of somehow perceiving that reality again through an illusion (no matter how beautiful or emotive), some of us work with the realization that those extractions are, in fact, a different 'reality' in themselves.