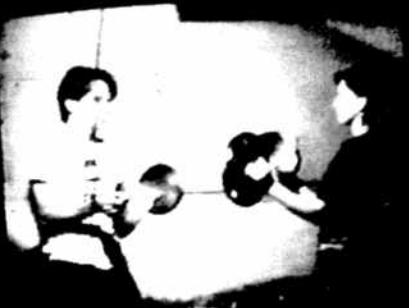


# crawling with **tarts**

by elisabeth vincentelli



Although *Crawling With Tarts* has been around for more than a decade, the experimental group is not exactly a household name. "We're isolationists in some ways," admits the duo's Michael Gendreau. "For a while we didn't even have a phone. But recently people have been asking to put some of our music out, so we've been returning their calls."

Based in San Francisco, Gendreau and partner Suzanne Dycus have released most of their music on limited-edition cassettes sold by mail. But, little by little, the duo's music is finding its way onto CDs, with a flurry of new compilations, reissues and new releases coming out on various small labels.

Dycus and Gendreau create open vistas of non-linear noise, spliced together with found sounds that appear haphazard until you discover the structure just beneath the surface. Long stretches of silence are barely disturbed by the occasional sound of piano strings. And then they throw a curve ball in the form of a regular, normal song. "We've always felt free to use any kind of form we needed at the time," Gendreau explains. "We never thought, 'Oh, we can't use the song form, it's so trite.'"

While the group's previous music is being reissued (much of it on the *Sulphur/Silent* compilation, *Madeleine*), Dycus and Gendreau are currently putting together experimental operas. Last year they released their first such piece, *Opera (ASP)* — on vinyl, because they felt the eventual formation of surface noise would add to the music. "We call them operas because they have a dramatic quality," says Gendreau, whose day job, appropriately enough, is consulting companies on their industrial noise problems.

In his spare time, Gendreau scavenges junk shops for interesting new instruments and other sound sources. *Crawling With Tarts* also uses turntables to manipulate old 78 RPM recordings from the '30s, '40s and '50s. Though the duo relies heavily on collage, they don't interpret the effect as the regurgitation of cultural messages. "We choose what we use on the basis of sound," Gendreau stresses. "That's how we choose which records to use for our operas, though we may also consider their content. Mainly we like divorcing something from its original use."

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