

Collaborative effort

Delay Tactics emerges from the underground with its musical 'Options'

by Kevin Martin

Etched in the vinyl between the spin-off grooves of Side A is a simple word, arranged to appear vaguely like a smile.

"Vindication!" it reads.

Side B's inscription, similarly arranged, reads, "Collaboration is Magic."

Two sides of the coin, two views of the same situation, the first inscription states an opinion with centrifugal force, while the second celebrates an interior dimension of the same opinion.

Both statements comment on the success of a recently-completed project, a "collaboration" among three St. Louis musicians who together are called Delay Tactics. The result is a locally recorded, locally produced album titled *Out-Pop Options*. It's significant for two reasons. It is by far the most elegant and most accomplished package of music ever to emerge from the St. Louis pop/rock underground. Beyond that, *Out-Pop Options* is the second LP release of Multiphase Records, a local and growing concern that has secured distribution for its products across the U.S. (primarily along the Eastern Seaboard), overseas and in South America.

Multiphase — and, so far, its releases — revolve around Carl Weingarten, guitarist, producer, music archivist and indefatigable promoter extraordinaire.

In addition to Weingarten, the Delay Tactics collaboration includes local legend of the avant-garde Reed Nesbit, a experimental guitarist and general scenemaker whose past projects have included a stellar date supporting Brown & Langrehr at a Tivoli theatre midnight show in late 1980, the highly hyped, rarely seen Group 6 and a failed project from this past summer that involved jungle drummers and dancing girls.

Rounding out the trio is Walt Whitney, who added synthesizer treatments to the pair's guitar textures and whose four-track basement studio the group used as its base of recording operations this spring and summer.

And what do the resulting four-track collaborations, as captured on *Out-Pop Options*' 11 selections, sound like? Frankly, the result is the sum of its parts and then some. Weingarten's first recorded project, the late-1981 Multiphase release *Submergings*, was subtitled "a study in sonic ambience." As such it was rather clearly indebted to Robert Fripp, the British guitarist and founder of King Crimson whose work with tape delay units and synthesized guitar, dubbed "Frippelectronics," served as the controlling idea behind the melodic experimentation of *Submergings*.

When Weingarten set his sights on a second project, however, he decided to make a break with what he'd done before. "After *Submergings* was released," he says, "a lot of the



response was 'I like it but where's the beat?' A lot of people like 'Jonah' (a track from *Submergings*), which was more rhythmic, more moving. I didn't want to do another album of just 'space music,' I wanted to try something different."

So Weingarten sought out Nesbit. "I knew Reed's guitar. I thought, goddamn, he plays some of the weirdest, but the most catchy, melody lines. Weird, but beautiful at the same time. And he, like me, was interested in working with rhythm."

Whitney entered the picture soon after. Intrigued by a copy of *Submergings* that had fallen into his hands, he contacted Weingarten and offered his talents, his equipment and his studio.

Over a six-month period the Delay Tactics concept of "out-pop" took form. The basic direction of the layers, the construction of the pieces, was almost architectural, Weingarten says. Ideas came about visually, structurally, musically and were built upon whatever foundation had been laid down.

The layers grew organically as well. "We had to be real patient," Wein-

garten says. "Sometimes the piece would tell us, 'Stop, no more, mix this...' One of the first pieces we did came out of a jam. We listened to (a playback) and said, 'This is good. Let's learn this.'"

Nesbit agrees. The project, he says, "was really, truly collaborative. Every part was built around another part. We were all involved in the project and we all made judgements about what would end up on the album. I didn't play on 'Cymbolia,' for example, but I felt that my contribution to that piece was *not* playing."

Weingarten comments, "(Reed) had aesthetic say on all the pieces... When he heard 'Cymbolia' (with guitars by Weingarten and synthesizers by Whitney) he said, 'I don't care that I'm not on this, it should be on the album.'"

"Cymbolia" is a slow-tempo instrumental which Weingarten characterizes as "Vangelis meets Wendy Carlos." Its melodic construction also owes something to the pop conceits of a band like the Cars. Other tracks on the album mix Oriental and

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Indian touches with African, Latin and even disco-inflected rhythms. Overall, the structure of *Out-Pop Options* owes as much to the influence of Robert Fripp and Brian Eno as to that of electronic Eurodisco producer Giorgio Moroder. One particularly crckling track is titled "Chasing Moroder" and incorporates a panoply of electronic effects over a mood lifted from the soundtrack of a chase movie.

Since the album is clearly not hard rock, since it features no vocals and since it's far-removed from the sludge of technodisco that's currently passed off as "New Wave," there's little hope that it will find a berth on St. Louis' major airwaves. It is, however, receiving airplay on local college radio and was featured on KWK-FM's recently discontinued "Freeform" program. One track was also used by KWK as

background for a station-produced commercial.

Weingarten is sanguine about the lack of local airplay. Since the album has secured a wide distribution, and since the production was relatively low-cost, local sales are not a prime concern. Whatever profits are made from *Out-Pop Options* will be plowed back into Multiphase Records for its future projects, one of which, a cassette compilation of local artists titled *Urban Cabaret*, is already near completion.

"This kind of work," he explains, "is not going to be a wasted effort. It's already paid for itself in many ways, not financially but in terms of each of us learning, growing, acquiring skills and in the feedback we've received. There's a lot of directions. We're just going to let the music tell us where to go. It's had control of us all along anyway."

Jan. 26-29

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Feb. 2

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Feb. 3

Circus

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Feb. 10

Metropolis

Feb. 11 & 12

Candy

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