

SPEAKEASY

The Visceral Experience of the ‘Minimus 3D Arkestra’

By Steve Dougherty

Jul 17, 2015 12:00 pm ET



Hayes Greenfield (L) and Ikuo Nakamura (R) before 3D image of people in an Andean village in Peru. Photo by Jonathan Slaff.

Hollywood special effects wizards would be hard pressed to invent a visual as eye-popping as the Aurora Borealis—the cosmic extravaganza known as the Northern Lights.

Film-maker and holography artist **Ikuo Nakamura** and jazz saxophonist **Hayes Greenfield’s** “Minimus 3D Arkestra” is a 55 minute cycle of 3D and timelapse film clips and improvised music performed live at the 13th Street Repertory Theater in Manhattan. And it comes as close to the visceral experience as cinema can get.

The two New York City artists’ collaboration transports audiences to the arctic circle for a view of the universe “from God’s point of view” — as Mr. Nakamura describes the Aurora Borealis.

To capture the phenomenon in 3D, Mr. Nakamura traveled to the far reaches of Canada’s Northwest Territories. In temperatures of 40 degrees below zero, he placed two identical cameras five miles apart, positioning them by using GPS and star chart software.

Wireless shutter release equipment would not work at that distance, so Mr. Nakamura set one of his cameras (protected by battery powered heaters) and aimed it at the heavens.

Minimus 3D Arkestra Trailer from ikuo Nakamura on Vimeo.

Minimus 3D Arkestra Trailer

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So that the second camera would film in synch with the first, he simultaneously started film rolling in both of his cameras—but left the lens cap on the second. Then he sped overland to his second, predetermined location. There he set camera two in place, aimed it at the same coordinates of night sky as the first and removed the lens cap. Now both cameras were recording the Aurora Borealis

at the same time.

The result, “Fire in the Sky,” is one of eight music and film pieces that the two artists perform—and “Minimus 3D Arkestra” is very much a live performance.

Here, Mr. Greenfield, a longtime film score composer and sideman who has worked with drummer **Rashied Ali**, **Barry Altshul**, **Tony Scott** and **Richie Havens** among others, records phrases as he plays them on his alto sax. He also scat sings, creates bass patterns with an effects foot pedal and keeps time by tapping his sax’s mouthpiece, looping and layering the sounds into a rich, almost orchestral tapestry.

The music for each piece begins with a tune that Mr. Greenfield already has in mind. As he improvises from the basic melody, his phrasing is at times in harmony with and at others in dramatic counterpoint to the images that are projected on a movie screen at the front of the theater.

- At the same time that Mr. Greenfield improvises to Mr. Nakamura’s visual images, the filmmaker manipulates them on a laptop, like a deejay scratches a record.

Throughout the performance, he slows, expands and sometimes freezes his film in interplay with Mr. Greenfield’s music.

Other pieces—“visual poems,” Mr. Nakamura calls them— transports viewers to far off and remote locations.

“Vanishing” finds Incan villagers living near Peru’s moutaintop Machu Picchu, the ancient city their ancestors built. Easter Island’s eerie and mysterious, human-like monoliths appear in “Hidden Remnants.” And “Continuum,” with footage of African dancers on the Ivory Coast and Easter Island natives preparing for stoneage tribal rites straight out of “The Golden Bough”— seems to travel through time itself.

For both artists, the collaboration is unique. Mr. Greenfield reckons it is the first “live, interactive 3D performance with surround sound” he has ever participated in or even heard of.

“In our show, the elements, the language of each piece is the same. But we play them differently every time,” Mr. Greenfield says. “What we have here—you can call it 3D jazz.”

“Minimus 3D Arkestra” is staged at 8 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays through July 30 at the 13th Street Repertory Theater, 50 West 13th St.

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HAYES GREENFIELD

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