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TAG: **ELI KESZLER L-CARRIER**

May 28, 2012

Eli Keszler's Inescapable Assaultiveness

The question is not whether anyone would want to subject themselves to [Eli Keszler's](#) new double cd *Catching Net*; it's why Keszler would create it in the first place. Much of it is calculatedly ugly, some of it downright unlistenable. But for adventurous listeners willing to embrace the dark side, it's irresistible. Like Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*, the first disc will clear a room in minutes if not seconds. But while that album was simply a series of random feedback loops, Keszler's compositions are carefully crafted and follow a discernable trajectory, a very creepy one. They're mood music for an apocalyptic industrial wasteland somewhere in New Jersey – imagine a blast furnace from outside, spewing smoke over a toxic marshland overpopulated with opossums (more on them a bit later). The sonics are industrial and mechanical but not cold: a grim, relentless purposefulness pervades these soundscapes. A close listen reveals a harmonic language, reaching for but evading any kind of resolution. It's a foreboding and sometimes repulsive language, but it's an original one, and can be compelling for those with the courage to jump in and wrestle with it.

Keszler's early background was founded in punk rock drumming, and that angst-driven intensity fuels the compositions here, although the tempos are glacial. The album contains four versions of *Cold Pin*, a large-scale installation piece premiered at the massive Cyclorama dome at the Boston Center for the Arts last year. Its central motifs are created by piano wires ranging up to 25

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feet long, struck by motor-driven tone arms to produce stylized bell-like funereal tones. Those tonalities evoke the sound of a being played at 33, but without the telltale slo-mo attack and bones more-or-less acoustic version, its murky rumble like demolition or diesel truck engine turning over at halfspeed, is of the second cd. The first contains three versions of that remarkable is how different they are. They're best experienced although some listeners will find the keening drone of a bowed five minutes into the first segment to be so high in the mix that painful.

It begins with contrasting low/high drones eventually punctuated piano-wire tones. While there's a live ensemble at work here drums, percussion and guitar, [Ashley Paul](#) on alto sax and bass harp, [Geon Mullen](#) on guitar, [Greg Kelley](#) on trumpet, [Reuben Son](#) on bassoon and Benny Nelson on cello, there's definitely some heavy processing going on. From there, a faster, scrambling percussive rhythm is introduced: it sounds like a particularly determined opossum making its way through a dumpster filled with tin cans. The tonalities eventually darken and descend to the point where they resemble distant gunfire or fireworks. It's unclear if the entire track or loop is live or processed (the cover of the promo cd shows Keszler seated at a mixing board). The final track is a horror film for the ears, a literally explosive payoff for all the suspense that's been building.

The second cd also includes the title track, a droning, sirening, vortex of an electroacoustic piece for string quartet and piano, and Collecting Basin, a more grand-scale, lower-register take on the Cold Pin concept, another installation piece incorporating a water tower and piano wires up to 250 feet long. For a taste of how this guy works, his latest mega-installation, L-Carrier will premiere this coming June 7 at 7:30 PM at [Eyebeam](#), 540 W 21st St. (10th/11th Aves.) with an ensemble including Keszler and many of the musicians on the cd plus Anthony Coleman on organ and celeste, Alex Waterman on cello, Spencer Yeh on violin and Catherine Lamb on viola. It promises to be an assaultively interesting evening: you may want to bring earplugs.

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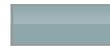
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