

Whose riff is it anyway?

New Haven Improvisers Collective runs 'Interference'

By Patrick Ferrucci

Register Entertainment Editor

NEW HAVEN — When you attend a CD-release party, you tend to expect to hear songs off the album. But what happens when your songs are improvisational?

When your group is called the New Haven Improvisers Collective, it's be hard to get up on stage and perform a song the same way as it was laid down on record.

"We'll be playing a few things," laughs Bob Gorry of New Haven, a guitar player who formed the loose-knit NHIC back in 2005. "But some of them will be more recognizable than others because they are more constrained. Nothing will sound the same, but some will be more similar."

When the Register first visited the collective a couple years back, Gorry and about 10 other local musicians had gathered for a workshop that would find them participating in various exercises to create new music. Someone would lead with a riff, someone else would follow up and, soon, a whole cacophony of sounds would fill the Neverending Bookstore on State Street. On the last Monday of every month, those workshops still happen. But at this moment, Gorry and five others are practicing for Saturday's show at Firehouse 12, a performance that will celebrate "Interference," the NHIC's first attempt at recorded music.

"Interference" is a 22-track recording of a show that group put on last year at Firehouse 12, a two-set event that found the NHIC delving into genres as dis-

COVER STORY

- **Event:** NHIC
- **When:** 8:30 p.m. Saturday
- **Place:** Firehouse 12, 45 Crown St., New Haven
- **Tickets:** \$10
- **Info:** (203) 785-0468



Members of the New Haven Improvisers Collective practices days before its CD-release party. Bob Gorry, left, Barry Seroff, Paul McGuire. Melanie Stengel/Register photos

parate as folk and progressive rock, free-form jazz and straight-ahead rock.

"The thought going into that show," explains Gorry, who also hosts a jazz radio show on WNHU, "was that we're going there, we're trying to do a great show and we're recording it. We tried not to think too much of it. We knew that if it was good enough, we'd put the time, money and energy into it to make it a CD."

"But he told us not to get our hopes up," laughs soprano sax player Paul McGuire of New Haven.

Well, once Gorry and the rest

of the band listened, they knew the recording was releasable. Featuring the talents of Gorry, McGuire, guitarist Jeff

Cedrone, bassist and clarinetist Carl Testa, vocalist Anne Rhodes, drummer Steve Zieminski and viola player Gabriel Kastelle, "Interference" does a little bit of everything.

It's loud. It's soft. It's subtle. It's over the top. One thing it's not is predictable.

"The matter of coming up for music for this group is great," says Gorry. "For one thing, you just ask them. The centerpiece of this

is a long composition I came up with called 'Quantum Decoherence,' which is this wacky, quantum-physics-inspired thing. We came up with music. It's a process of getting together, coming up with some structures and then letting go because it's about doing it in the moment."

Of course, says guitarist Cedrone, things change when you bring your loosely constructed works to the group. "Someone may have a piece that they had in mind, but then the group just changes it, mostly for the better. The group tends to add to it and make it better than what the personal idea was."

But one thing NHIC was scared of was whether the entire recording was going to be usable. It's one thing to go to Firehouse 12 and perform for two sets, for more than an hour. Yet it's an entirely different

thing to listen to a record that long.

"You can't listen to this stuff for so long," explains McGuire.

And that's why it was so important for the band to take the original recording home and listen intently, note things that may not work.

"I listened to the first song," says Gorry, "and really liked it. By the fourth one, I was like, 'These are all good.' I was so pleased with the music and how everyone played and brought so much to it. You hear it, and you know it's good. I'm very proud of it, because, I think, the entire thing holds up. And that's rare with this kind of music because sometimes things won't work at all, sometimes spectacularly."

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