

Infrasound

A spatial acoustic concert series by Randy H.Y. Yau and Scott Arford

Annual Report
May 12, 2004

1. **manifesto.**

"There is nothing else but sound, all that exists is vibration."

—Zbigniew Karkowski

Hear with your body. This is not about music. This is not about performance or the performer. The goal is sound and the explicit translation of sound into physical force. The goal is internal and external realization. It is about provoking new modes of perceiving and experiencing one's own body—triggering variable and autonomous psycho-physiological response. It is about the total acoustic sense of space—observing sound to measure the capacity of architecture. It is about the phenomenon of resonance or sympathetic vibration—all things working in one continuum.

—Randy H.Y. Yau, Scott Arford 3.31.01

2. objective.

History, mission and purpose

History.

Infrasound initiated on March 31, 2001 when Randy Yau and Scott Arford premiered *Infrasound 1* at the San Francisco sound arts venue, *7hz*. Collaboration for this project came out of a common interest and previous workings with the phenomenon of low frequencies by each artist. Yau previously exhibited installation works utilizing fm synthesis to translate infrasonic waves from an inaudible range to an audible and tactile field. Arford's interest in spatial acoustics stem from his architectural background. In both performance and recorded works, his integration of low frequency conditions play an important role in achieving spatialization. Together, through discussion and the exchange of ideas, the Infrasound collaborative concert series was born.

Mission.

The Infrasound mission derives from its manifesto. Through research, experimentation and documentation in multiple architectural and performance settings, the Infrasound series and methodology is constantly evolving. More than just creating and delivering an "infrasonic" effect, everything from composition to presentation originates from the principle mission of activating the body and space through sound.

Purpose.

Internal realization: Saturating the body with sonic and subsonic vibration.

"It is about provoking new modes of perceiving and experiencing one's own body—triggering variable and autonomous psycho-physiological response."

External realization: Generate awareness of spatial boundaries defining and transforming the sound experience; The architectural space becomes an acoustic container, reacting and multiplying low frequency arrays—solidifying a void where sound pressure levels interject between audience and space.

"It is about the total acoustic sense of space—observing sound to measure the capacity of architecture."

Resonance: Activating space to generate sympathetic vibration in both body and architecture—making all fields inseparable and one.

"It is about the phenomenon of resonance or sympathetic vibration—all things working in one continuum."

3. method.

Tests, communication and thresholds

Tests.

The specific nature of each space denotes a certain set of existing acoustic conditions. Resonant frequencies, standing waves, reflections and other acoustic phenomena vary widely depending on the dimensions, layout, volume, and materiality of a space. Each space must be thoroughly tested prior to a performance to determine what aspects of these phenomena can be used to help achieve our desired results.

Communication.

Non-verbal communication is a staple of the Infrasound concept. Communication of our ideas to the audience is achieved via sound and its translation into mechanical force. A dialogue is established between the audience, performer, and space through the most basic, non-intellectual, physical means. Vibration alone is means of communication.

Communication between the artists during the duration of the performance occurs only via written messages. Again, non-verbal means is essential to the idea. Notes* about the effects, direction, the state of things, and other critical information is jotted down. This written artifact ultimately becomes a sort of retro-active score. *See figures 4 and 5.

Threshold.

The entire trajectory of the performance is structured around the idea of discovering, maintaining, and crossing thresholds. Both the physical and perceptual sense of threshold is considered.

Physical threshold: Every physical body (particularly those which are human) have resonant thresholds which, when crossed, will cause that object to vibrate. Various parts of a particular space, as well as the space taken as a whole, has a unique resonant threshold. The PA system, too, has a threshold at which the speakers begin to flutter and cut out. These thresholds are empirical and measurable.

Perceptual threshold: The threshold of perception, audience experience, and psycho-physiological response is highly subjective and specific to the individual. It is also, perhaps, the most important threshold in this experiment. The experiential environment of our stated goals must be consistently maintained.

The ramped structure of the performance then, works to maintain the balance between increased physical thresholds without overriding or interrupting the perceptual threshold. A constant, ramping state of equilibrium escalates toward increasing density until, finally the mass breaks, white noise floods the room and space rushes back in to fill the void.

4. results.

Documentation and testimony

Documentation.

The results of each Infrasound performance are carefully recorded and documented via open mic and board recordings. The recordings thus become a means to observe and compare acoustic phenomena and the unique characteristics of each host space.

Testimony.

Comments from audience members after various performances.

Sonic healing: *"I want to thank you so much for that. You healed my leg. No kidding. I injured it recently, and it's been hurting like hell all night. Now it feels fine, I can walk on it and everything!"*
(Several of his friends confirmed.)

Several weeks later, the same man:

"Hey, didn't you do that Infrasound performance? You know, you really did heal my leg. Seriously, no shit man, I'm not joking. It's been totally fine since then! Thanks."
(Again, several of his friends confirmed.)

Drugs: *"It's the closest thing to doing drugs without doing them."*

"Man, I felt like I was tripping."

Diastoles: *"There was one part where I was actually kind of scared. I started to become hyper aware of my heartbeat. I could really feel it—it was racing. Then, it beat twice really quickly!"*

Aircraft: *"Were you doing that? The door was locked and we couldn't get in but we could hear it, no problem. The whole building was completely shaking and vibrating. I thought it was going to yank off of the foundation and launch into space."*

"Its like trying to land a Jumbo Jet."

"It felt like sitting in an army helicopter, with a frozen faxmodem in my lap that all of a sudden started to beep."

Space: *"I could feel all of this space, right in front of me. Then, when you stopped it just went away."*

"The air was so thick with particles of sound, then when it was over, I realized how big the room was."

Emotion: *"It was beautiful, I cried... twice."*

5. personnel.

Artist biographies

Randy H.Y. Yau.

Randy H.Y. Yau is a curator, sound artist and designer who has been active in the sonic arts since 1993. He has produced multiple solo and collaborative audio works which have been distributed internationally. He has also performed extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Japan, and has recently performed China, Peru, and Australia. Yau founded and continues to co-curate *Activating the Medium*, an annual sonic arts festival which travels through Universities, museums and alternative art spaces across California including The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. He also founded *Auscultare Research*, a record label releasing sound works from artists all over the world. He has conducted radio programs focused on sound art for over 11 years and continues to broadcast on KPFA's "No Other Radio Network." Since 1999, Yau has served as the Curatorial Director of *23five Incorporated*, a non-profit sonic arts advocacy group based in San Francisco. He currently serves as the organization's Executive Director. Yau holds a Bachelor of Science in Applied Art and Design from California Polytechnic State University.

Scott Arford.

Scott Arford is one of the leading figures of new media arts in the San Francisco Bay Area. As a diverse electronic artist, Scott Arford has completed numerous projects with sound and video. Working alone and with collaborators, his projects include sound and visual performances as *Radiosonde*, fully immersive multimedia installations and performances with *TEST:*, a monthly cable broadcast, and multi-monitor video and sound installation/sculptures. Recently, Arford premiered solo works at The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California State University, Chico, California Polytechnic State University, Cuesta College Fine Arts, and *Beyond Baroque*. He has also completed sound design for Brian Conley's *WAR* featured in the *BitStreams Exhibition* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Squid Soup's *Altzero2* installation at the ICA in London and collaborated with the *Bureau of Low Technology (B.O.L.T)* at the Salon festival in Zagreb. In 1995 Arford founded *7hz*, a warehouse/performance space dedicated to supporting live electronic experimental media. *7hz* has since featured such international artists as Francisco López, Zbigniew Karkowski, John Duncan, Bob Ostertag, John Bischoff, The Haters and more. Arford holds a B.A. from Kansas State University in Architecture and Design.

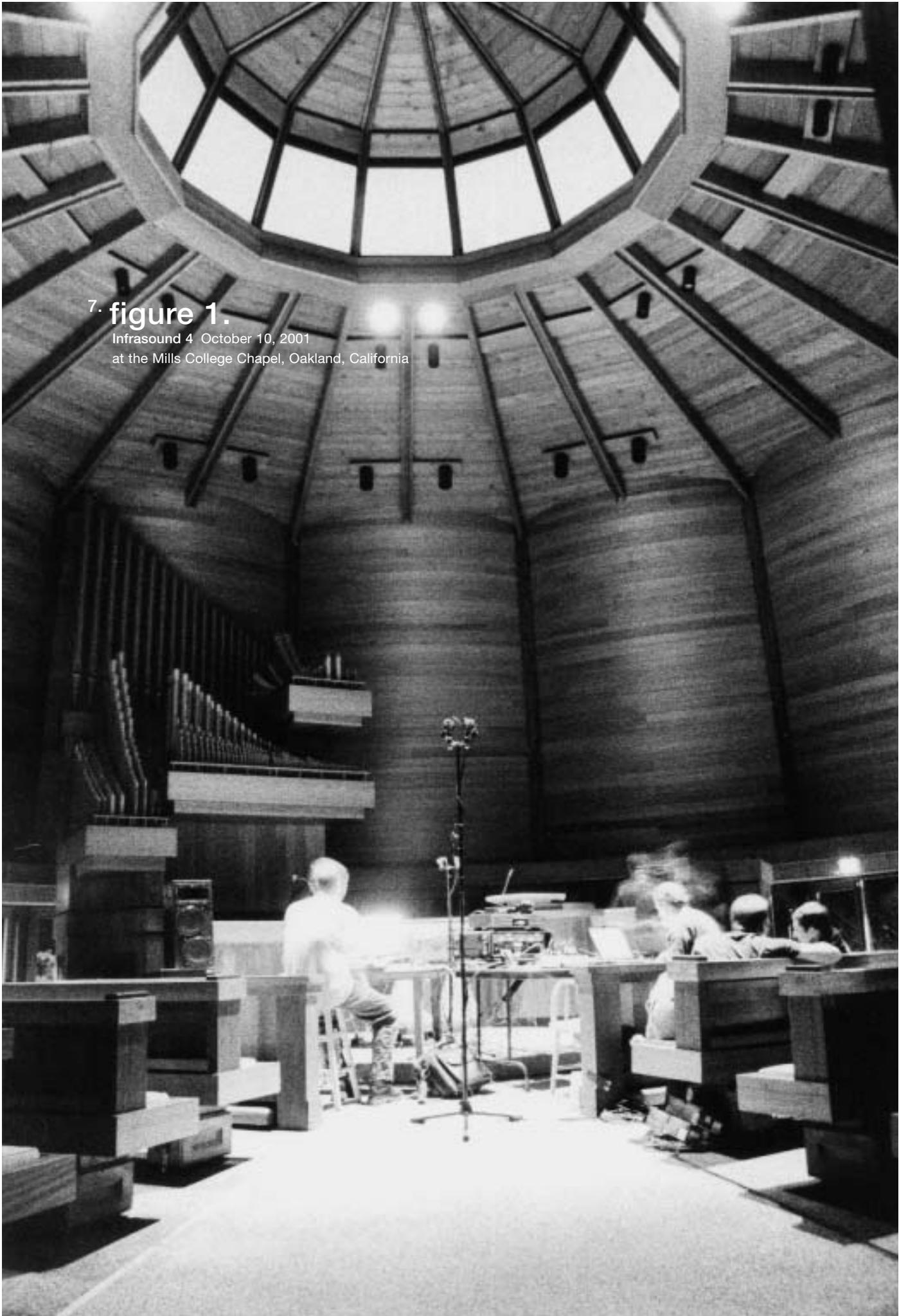
6. previous concerts

Infrasound 1–14

- Infrasound 1** March 31, 2001
sponsored by 7hz and 23five Incorporated for the second annual *Music for a New Mess Festival*
performed at 7hz, 1814 Illinois Street, San Francisco, California
- Infrasound 2** July 11, 2001
sponsored by 3feetofftheground Galleries
performed at the 3feetofftheground Gallery, 155 Tenth Street, San Francisco, California
- Infrasound 3** August 23, 2001
sponsored by Beyond Baroque Literary Arts for the annual *Beyond Music Festival*
performed at Beyond Baroque, Venice, California
- Infrasound 4** October 10, 2001
sponsored by Mills Center for Contemporary Music for the *Songlines Concert Series*
performed at the Mills College Chapel, Oakland, California
- Infrasound 5** October 14, 2001
sponsored by the Horse Cow Gallery
performed at the Horse Cow Gallery, Sacramento, California
- Infrasound 6** October 15, 2001
sponsored by The Herz-Lion Foundation for the *Alterknit Series*
performed at The Knitting Factory, Los Angeles, California
- Infrasound 7** October 18, 2001
sponsored by the Department of Fine Arts, Cuesta College
performed at the Music and Art Appreciation Hall, Cuesta College, San Luis Obispo, California
- Infrasound 8** January 18, 2002
sponsored by Aaron Ximm for the *Noun Sound Concert*
performed at 964 Natoma Street, San Francisco, California
- Infrasound 9** February, 2 2002
sponsored by Throat Productions
performed at the ABCO Waterproofing Center, Oakland, California
- Infrasound 10** February, 7 2003
sponsored by The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and 23five Incorporated
performed at the Phyllis Wattis Theater, SFMOMA, San Francisco, California
- Infrasound 11** February, 15 2003
sponsored by Cuesta College Fine Arts and 23five Incorporated
performed at the Interact Theater, San Luis Obispo, California
- Infrasound 12** March, 25 2003
sponsored by Black Box Theater
performed at the Black Box Theater, Oakland, California
- Infrasound 13** July, 11 2003
sponsored by Liquid Architecture 4, The 4th National Festival of Sound Art
performed at the Royal Melbourne Institute for Technology (RMIT), Melbourne, Australia
- Infrasound 14** May, 8 2004
sponsored by Asphodel Limited
performed at the Recombinant Labs Compound, San Francisco, California

7. **figure 1.**

Infrasound 4 October 10, 2001
at the Mills College Chapel, Oakland, California





8. **figure 2.**

Infrasound 4 October 10, 2001
at the Mills College Chapel, Oakland, California

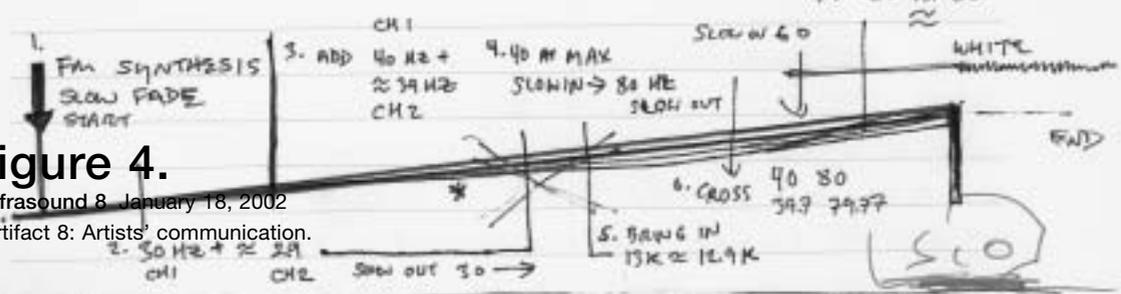


9. **figure 3.**

Infrasound 2 July 11, 2001
at 3feetofftheground Gallery

INFRASOUND 8

JANUARY 18, 2002



10. figure 4.
Infrasound 8 January 18, 2002
Artifact 8: Artists' communication.

* MIX 30 + 40 (MAX 40 BEFORE TAKING OUT 30 AND BRINGING IN 80)

CROSS CHANNEL SHIFT

CH 1: 39.7 CH 2: 79.7
CH 1: 40 CH 2: 80
NOT RAD

WE'RE AT MAX

120 118
120 117
120 116
60 59
↓
58 (SPROGS UP)

I'M FADING OUT FM SYNTH.
BEAUTIFUL!
FM SYNTH OUT VERY NICE.

SHIFT 60 ~ 59
WHITE NOISE COMING IN IN ~~3~~ 3 MINUTES.
WHITE COMING IN

RANDY
DO YOU HEAR SOUND FROM RIGHT?
RIGHT SPEAKER (GROVE SIDE). I CAN'T TELL.
I'M CONTROLLING LEVELS. (YOUR LEVELS.)
YOU LIKE?
WE'RE 8 MINUTES IN - ~~BRING IN~~ SHIFT 29
BRING IN 40 SCO
SURE - SCO
BRING IN 13K HIGH ON A PULSE
CROSSFADE SCO OUT 30/40
COMPRESS

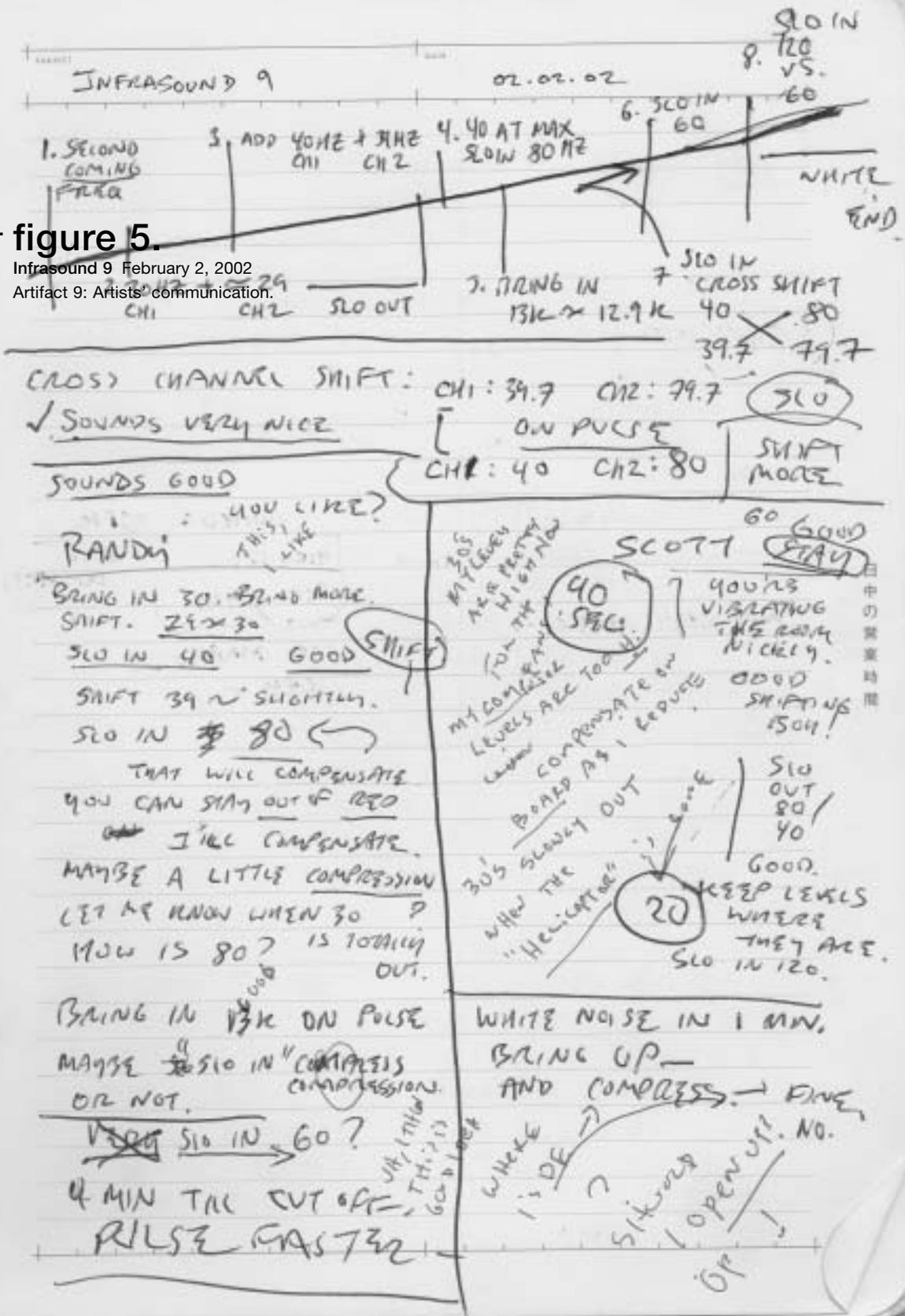
SCOTT
SLOW IN 30 MORE.
30/12
YES (?)
I'M MAX 30 PUMP (INTERPAC) UP
THIS LIKE 19A UP
WHEN STEREO SHIFTING OCCURS. BRING IN HIGH? 13K.
LET ME KNOW WHEN STEREO CROSS SHIFT OCCURS.
WILL START NOW SLOW
A LITTLE COMPRESSION MAYBE?
YES. SLO.
W/RTM LEVEL. NOT MET.

+ SHIFT

日本の音楽時間

11. figure 5.

Infrasound 9 February 2, 2002
 Artifact 9: Artists' communication.



12. **figure 6.**

Infrasound personnel #1
Randy H.Y. Yau.



13. **figure 7.**

Infrasound personnel #2
Scott Arford.

