

exhibitreview

BY SHARMILA VENKATASUBBAN

SHAR@INPGH.COM

Making Music

The sounds of technology long gone.

ORCHESTRAL MANUEVERS

By [The User] and Marina Rosenfeld
Wood Street Galleries // Downtown
Through May 12: 471-5605

Enter "The Office Suite," the performance space of [The User], and you'll find ten workstations complete with old 286-processor computers, monitors, swivel chairs and dot matrix printers. The desks here aren't the IKEA variety; these are large whales from the '70s, metal institutions of tedious work ethic and time cards. This is about getting the job done, not atmosphere, and these dot matrix printers represent something other than the information superhighway and the cellphone-chic that has accompanied it.

But [The User], an artists' collective that consists of two members — architect Thomas McIntosh and composer Emmanuel Madan — have found a way out of this rigid structure that removes individuality from the individual in order to facilitate productivity. Their "Symphony for Dot Matrix Printers" arranges the various noises made by these printers into a sophisticated musical structure, that sounds similar to electronica. Using a network server that acts as a pre-programmed "conductor," the printers are now musical instruments. They produce rhythms and notes from the "imprint of characters" that add up to a full musical composition.

Attached to each printer is a lighted lamp, microphone and small camera that captures the motion of the printer, which is then projected on a large screen: The audience can hear the music and see its artful rhythm at the same time. On opening night, [The User] performed a live remix of the work, amplified by 12 speakers and four subwoofers. But for the serene group of onlookers (who clearly didn't know what to expect) and the ten workstations spread evenly throughout the small Wood Street space, this could've been a backdrop for a rave.

In fact, the music, rather than [The User's] comment on the nature of the workplace, takes center stage here. It's almost as if the concept the artists tout is just an excuse to showcase their unique talent. McIntosh and Madan stood at the back of the room behind their equipment, enraptured by their own music and the verve they exuded clearly caught on with the audience. Perhaps by using printers to make music *does* challenge the ethics of work but more interesting is the way these two young musicians use an out-moded technology to produce a very "in" sound.

>> *Orchestral Manuevers also includes Marina Rosenfeld's "fragment opera 7 — love scene," another work that connects the visual and acoustic.*