

# The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

FYS 129

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## Various Quotes

These slides contain a collection of some of the quotes largely from the musicians that are studied during the course.

The idea is to present “musicians in their own words”.



## **Otomo Yoshihide**

**Japanese guitarist & electronics player  
(August 1, 1959–)**

## Yoshihide on What He is Doing with his Music

What are you doing with your music?

**Yoshihide:** Listen to the non-existent things that may exist in the future.

from Blocks of Consciousness and the Unbroken Continuum, 2005.

## Yoshihide on Contradictions

LP: Your music is a good example of the diversity of music happening today and it has been said that it is virtually impossible to categorize.

**Yoshihide:** My work branches off in so many directions; I can't explain it very well even to myself. I've even worked on incompatible projects at the same time, embracing contradictions. Reality, not only music, is so varied and filled with contradictions that it's difficult to grasp. ... I believe that a way of life in which one nestles into contradictory reality and within that reality, looks and listens closely, rather than just seeking clear-cut answers is the essence of creation. That's why I can never come up with a clear, simple explanation.

from Music and the Creative Spirit by Lloyd Peterson, 2006.

## Yoshihide on Listening

LP: How much of the popularity of creative music has to do with a listener having a different way of thinking or mindset?

**Yoshihide:** In any case, I don't believe today's music consists only of listening to things that musicians have created in a one-sided way. I think that the partnership resulting from bidirectionality between listeners and creators is becoming the central point in the creation of music.

from Music and the Creative Spirit by Lloyd Peterson, 2006.

## Yoshihide on the Creative Process

LP: In a previous interview, you mentioned that when free music works best for you, that it's the process that is most important.

**Yoshihide:** I personally think that the creative process itself is the most important aspect of music. I don't play music in order to confirm an outcome that I'm already sure of. As I play, I always have a sense of something I don't even understand. In the same way, I don't compose in order to express something that I have in my mind; I'm interested in the kind of music where during the process of listening to the sounds that emerge, I keep discovering relationships between familiar sounds and new sounds. Inherent in music is the fact that as soon as you play something, it's gone. Therefore, rather than treasuring things that are complete, I like the kind of approach that involves paying close attention to things that are disappearing.

from Music and the Creative Spirit by Lloyd Peterson, 2006.

## Yoshihide on the Sampling Virus

PSF: Could you talk about the Sampling Virus project?

**Yoshihide:** I started that about eight years ago and made one CD for Extreme in Australia. This is for use by anyone. If someone wants it, I can send them the sampling tapes and they can sample anything from me and make anything. Then they get something just from the material. So it's kind of a virus, influence process. Still now, I can hear my virus from CD's. I'm happy that Stockhausen will be using this. I'm just happy that everyone can use it. It's never my music because the sampling virus is sounds from TV. I think it's almost finished because everyone can sample very easily.

Otomo Yoshihide Interview by Jason Gross, 1998.



## Yoshihide on the Turntablism

Do you think turntablism is merely a representation of our acoustic reality, with our sound environment perceived as a great, permanent mixture? Even Ground Zero sounded to me like a live mix of different musicians, each with his/her own story and technique.

**Yoshihide:** I'm not that interested in turntablism itself. Lately I've been thinking that sampling and mixing aren't that special, either; they're just two of many options. It certainly can be said that music is an eternal remix. But since things can be called anything, depending on the angle they're viewed from, I don't think verbal explanations have any meaning. I'm tired of the tendency to treat remixing and sampling as special--it doesn't interest me at all. But I am interested in the fact that people have started using the turntable as a musical instrument--recycling it, in a way--just when its role as a practical piece of audio equipment was ending and it was about to retire from the scene. In this sense I'm interested in the work of musicians like Christian Marclay, Martin Tétréault, Philip Jeck, and Tetuzi Akiyama. Yasunao Tone's way of using CDs is extremely interesting, too. I still feel that there are possibilities in that direction. About my work with Ground Zero, I don't want to comment. I think it's a good thing for different people to see it from different angles.

Otomo Yoshihide Interview by Michel Henritzi, 2001.

## Yoshihide on the Sadomasochistic Music

What should we think of music that establishes a sadomasochistic relationship with its audience through pain? From speed metal to techno to noise, there's an avid pursuit of musical extremes. How do you react when you are told that the sounds produced in Filament are extremely painful? What would you say about the beauty of these sounds?

**Yoshihide:** I don't perform with Filament with the intention of inflicting pain. I simply make sounds I like. In using Otomo Yoshihide Interview 2001 Page 4 of 7 <http://www.janimprov.com/yotomo/interview01.html> 11/13/2012 noise or high-pitched sine waves, I'm not pursuing any kind of good feeling that might be derived from pain, because I don't want to make sounds that are really painful to me. But I know these sounds are quite difficult for some people to take, so I don't want to force them to listen to them. I have absolutely no interest in musical exchanges based on a sadomasochistic type of discipline. To me, Filament's sound is very beautiful. But the experience of beauty is always linked to danger. The danger is the cessation of thought. I really want people to be aware of this.

Otomo Yoshihide Interview by Michel Henritzi, 2001.

## Yoshihide on the Reasons for Making Music

**Yoshihide:** I don't really understand the idea of a valid reason to make music. Why do you have to explain in words why you make music? It's the same as not being able to explain in words why you live. You don't need a reason to dance. I don't know yet why I'm alive. I simply live, doing what I do every day, what I think is good, trying to make my life better, finding small pleasures like enjoying good food. In any case, I think dancing and singing badly, being disappointed in love, and making strange noises are incomparably better than conducting terrorism and dropping bombs.

Otomo Yoshihide Interview by Michel Henritzi, 2001.

## A Fragment from Yoshihide's Fukushima Lecture

**Yoshihide:** We perform pretty irresponsible music onstage, saying stuff like "the beauty lies in letting the feedback do its own thing," and making high-pitched squealing noises to our heart's content. But even we can turn off the noise with a flick of a switch. The current situation is like a feedback machine that's squealing continuously without a switch to stop it. So I was thinking of making a machine like that. It'll be called "Genpatsu-kun (Nuclear Boy) No. 1," and it won't have a switch to shut it down. It just keeps leaking noise and can't be stopped. When you turn it on with a bang, this sound just keeps coming out from it for about 20 thousand years. Bang, buzz! Or it explodes when you cut the power supply. I'm sure Genpatsukun No. 1 will dominate the world of noise music as the most powerful noise machine ever. I'm just really disappointed that I don't possess the skill to build something like that. I shouldn't be saying things like this, should I? Am I being imprudent?

Otomo Yoshihide, Lecture at Tokyo University of the Arts on April 28, 2011, "The Role of Culture: After the Earthquake and Man-made Disasters in Fukushima"  
<http://www.japanimprov.com/yotomo/fukushima/lecture.html>