

guitar map dowser

live improvisation for guitar and electronics

recorded in Dublin, March 29th, 2015

Programme Note

In this piece, the guitar is divided in two using a pencil as a third bridge, giving two distinct sets of notes which can be played with both hands, almost like a zither. As tabletop guitars such as this are often played with objects like springs, mallets and metal bars, I thought it would also be interesting to experiment with using digital models of real objects (in this case a pendulum) to virtually play the instrument, in a way which is not really physically possible in real life. The title is a reference to the type of divination known as dowsing and its associated use of pendulums and maps. The apparently spooky movement of a ouija board, diving rod or pendulum is of course a result of reflexive, miniscule muscular reactions which can be outside of the awareness of the person in question, which is perhaps a little bit like improvising music.

- enda bates

Technical Notes



For the performance in [the video](#), a pencil was used as the third bridge and placed at the 5th harmonic position just behind the 9th fret. Screwdrivers can also work well, particularly if the required position is away from the frets. In this case, the 5th harmonic position used is just behind the 9th fret, so a hexagonal pencil can be nicely balanced half on the 9th fret with a pointed end making contact with the strings.

The guitar has a Roland GK-3 hexaphonic pickup and a standard humbucker at the bridge, another humbucker mounted (very crudely) at the neck, and a Sustainiac stealth plus electromagnetic sustainer. Everything is sent to the laptop, with the stereo humbuckers routed via EHX Freeze and Eventide Timefactor pedals, and the Roland via a Spicetone 6Appeal polyphonic fuzz/breakout box.

The electronic improvisation is performed using the excellent MIAP externals for Max MSP / Pure Data by Zachary Seldness (www.zacharyseldness.com/miap), and SPATIUM by Rui Penha (www.spatium.ruipenha.pt), with some digital modeling and convolution under the hood.

For more on augmented and prepared guitars, see www.endabates.net/EndaBates-AugmentedGuitar.html