

Charlie Foster

May B. Smith English Composition Award

The Benevento-Russo Duo Experience

Ah, the night sky that is The Duo. We can only understand so much about the vastness of Earth's nocturnal expanse, or about Marco Benevento and Joe Russo. The origin of the one is as alien as the sounds of the others. At the same time, the permanence of the former I'd liken to the warm familiarity of the latter. These boys sound like...

*Nature with electronic noises and key-mashing and computer screens, nature with hand-offs and breakdowns and deconstructions and rebirth. Natural free flow, deliberate adherence to formula... Predictable... Then mind-blowing... The ball-fake, the shimmy-shake, the watch-the-queen-as-the-cards-rearrange. They oscillate, they revolve/rotate. It always makes sense; they always make you miss.*

I can't catch what they send out, ultimately. The sound waves are for my kids' antennae, not for mine. A forward-thinking miscreant like me will grow old and die before humans have the technology to express properly and process completely what these musicians manufacture. They know what they're making, though, and it will make my children proud of their parent's taste. Years from now they'll pore over holograms of my MP3s, like I flipped through my dad's crates of records, and they'll marvel at some of the selections that don't seem to mesh with my personality, or that hint at the emotional climates at those times in my life, so long before theirs began. The real moment's moment, however, will come when they find and sample The Duo. I found my pop's *Woodstock: Music from the Original Soundtrack and More*, a three-record set which culminates with "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Purple Haze," and "Wild Thing" with an instrumental bow out. Picture now:

*The image of my descendant will line up perfectly with my past self, and as I plugged in a dusty record player, he will send Duo music from an electronic archive to some program that exists only as floating lights. Maybe an iridescent phonograph will appear, and a needle made of ones and zeroes will lower into grooves of ones and zeroes. The resultant simulated spin will weave musical notes into the air.*

*The world's understanding will have caught up by then, and the progression of popular sound will prepare the kid for something new, but nothing will ready him or her for the specifics of virtuosity. In that garage, so long ago, Jimi surprised me, and at the same time ruined 90% of rock and roll, no-- songs, for me. I ought to hug strangers for the luck that led me to that fine art. Similarly, the Duo will play for my kid all that music should be.*

In the meantime, I'll stand at a Duo show and nod along with what I can divine from the pulse and the shimmer of the music. I need not understand how something is perfect; knowing that it is will suffice for my lifetime. Comprehending the height, width, and breadth of the Universe wouldn't help me stargaze; simple awe fuels my fascination. For my concert-going dollar bill, the Duo is my night sky.