

RICHARD CHARTIER

Richard Chartier performing
at Micro Mutek 2, Montreal,
April 6, 2001

Richard Chartier creates extremely spare and subtle compositions that explore the unexpectedly rich threshold between sound and silence. Chartier, a sound artist based in Virginia, uses digital tools to craft his own unique, extremely small sounds. These faint microsounds are reminiscent of the inner mechanized workings of common electronic devices or appliances; however, Chartier considers his work to be more akin to abstract audio sculptures that map the physicality of sound, rather than referencing existing noises. His sound works are meant to be played at extremely low volumes, either on headphones or in site-specific installations, in order to create tactile environments that let the listener become totally absorbed in the act of perception.

In this untitled track from Chartier's CD *series*, quickly passing, pulsing waves of hushed whirs, gentle hisses, delicate clicks, and staticky pops are separated by measured intervals of silence or low rumbling drones that resonate back and forth across the perceptual limits of human hearing. With concentrated listening, these discrete elements gradually yield a discernible flow of sonic patterns and cycles that nonetheless resist coalescing into a regular rhythm. Chartier's subtle arrangements, at once structured and intuitive, reveal the complex quality and texture of each individual sound fragment. They also extend into the digital realm of experimental sound some of the ideas of minimalist composers such as Morton Feldman. By taking us to the brink of the inaudible, Chartier invites us to focus our attention on the process of listening and to reconsider our preconceptions about the nature of sound and silence.

