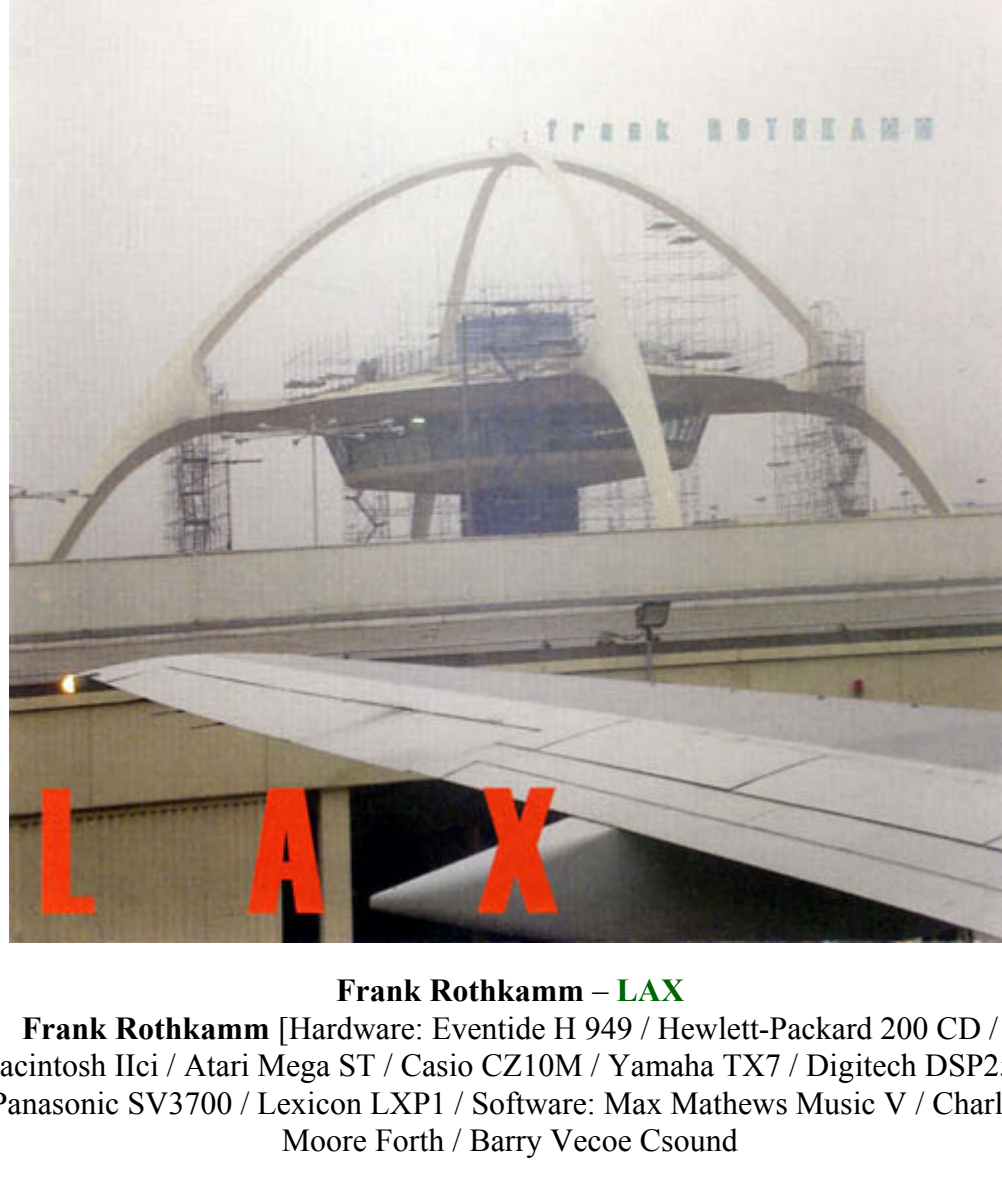


Frank Rothkamm

LAX



Frank Rothkamm – LAX

Frank Rothkamm [Hardware: Eventide H 949 / Hewlett-Packard 200 CD / Macintosh Ilei / Atari Mega ST / Casio CZ10M / Yamaha TX7 / Digitech DSP256 / Panasonic SV3700 / Lexicon LXP1 / Software: Max Mathews Music V / Charles Moore Forth / Barry Vecoe Csound

FLUX Records. Duration: 41:39

Rothkamm about **LAX** (quoted without shame from his MySpace page):

"LAX is a cinema vérité of contrasting soundtracks: 10 scenes map the gradual collective re-wiring of reality to that of high-parallelism during the 2 years before the year 00 in the megacity of Los Angeles.

LAX examines the new cartography of underground music or Musik des Unterbaus that emerges from the fallout of contemporary society's reaction to stress. It listens to Los Angeles' true ideology.

LAX is a not Mostly Mozart, but Mostly Marx; not only historical materialism but dialectic Duck Soup - providing mankind a soundtrack to the "economic structure of society, the real foundation [Unterbau], on which arises a legal and political superstructure [Überbau]"

LAX was recorded in its entirety in Los Angeles with vintage equipment - including, but not limited to, a Hewlett-Packard first-generation model sine wave oscillator, and classic Atari and Macintosh home computers, both of which were custom programmed.

LAX is post-computer, post-electronic, post-ambient, post-field-recording, post-noise, post-industrial, post-sound-art, post-office. It shapes the parallel reality of the 21st century as a process of Synesthesia, where sound becomes in sight: the Freedonia of music."

Frank Rothkamm gropes his lingual way through the ridiculous and laughable downside of the world of technology, extracting his very own art form from it, against all odds. I see his CD covers turn more and more arty, the deeper he bores into the calculus of digits and angles and hypothetical spaces that seem to emit like metallic mist from the mouths and eyes of Indian computer programmers from **Varanasi** and **Bombay**.

The **LAX** CD cover comes across in ghastly, ghostly sci-fi scenes from **Los Angeles**, downplayed in withheld colors, as if time itself had lost its power, and matter begun to dissolve into shreds of memories of itself, all the eleven dimensions of quantum theory curling up in fragile scrolls of uncertainty.

Rothkamm has found a zero place of composition, bringing lost into found, sharing his artistic thoughts on emptiness in full measures with us, proving the contradictory property of existence. He's like those zero spot photographers (I'm one of them) who like to take thousands of pictures of scruffy places under highway overpasses or empty corners of abandoned factories – but **Rothkamm** achieves something else too, something more, certifying in his compositions the prime quality of the turned-away; the magic of the stale and rusty, the decaying and the downright hostile – only, he works with the mind, not the world of matter... and the mind is a sordid place of much hostility and innumerable zero spots! We're walking on stilts through a swamp of ill will and ego illusions.

The music? Brilliant:

Track 1. Temporarily Unavailable OR Descent into LAX [4:27]

These rumbling, soaring sounds are alien, desolate, scary – if you want to feel cozy and safe. This is situated on the far side of cozy, in the opposite direction of safe. You feel like a completely insignificant life form in the vicinity of the indifferent source of these electromagnetic sonorities, reminding me some of the **Nasa-Voyager I & II Space Sound recordings** of the **Uranus** fly-by, issued on a CD from **Brain/Mind Research** in **El Camino, California** back in 1989, but these curtains of carelessness could well be sonic representations of the Northern lights, and they also bring me fond memories of some of the best scenes out of **2001; A Space Odyssey**.

Frank Rothkamm has managed to wring these rather banal and simple sounds slightly out of whack, to a sounding position that renders them an unyielding tension, the **Harry Martinson** way, the **Aniara** way, glimpsing into a void so mighty and endless that it leaves nobody sane. **The Beauty of Temporarily Unavailable OR Descent into LAX** is hard and tough, acid clean, down to the molecular level. Praise be!

Track 2. Los Angeles OR LATV [2:53]

Surprisingly, **Rothkamm** moves into a realm where I haven't met him before; a text-sound arena, a plunder-phonetic collage kind of land – which he masters! The first clicks of an old film projector moves rapidly into a maze of mixed and layered – as if poured out of a bucket – slabs and shreds of spoken moments, tilted and swung around and flying up like flocks of gulls and down and away like flakes of soot. The velocity is speedy, the density crushing, the richness of expression nasty! We love it! I play this a couple times more, out of sheer pleasure – and I turn the volume UP!!! Text-sound rocking and rolling, staggering intoxicated down a back alley, bumping into lingual trashcans and human resources!

Track 3. Beehive OR Focal Point of Masonic meditation [4:23]

A mighty dome of bells, in a deep vibrancy that gridlocks you from bar one. The metallic serenity is so rich that it probably cures cancer. I'd introduce **Rothkamm's** **Beehive** in all hospitals if I had the power to. It's lifesaving music; crisis remedy: t

he end to war and aggression: play it in the head of the President; let it sound through the army's loudspeakers in **Iraq**, play it loudly through the **New York** subway.

Nobody can resist this fanatic beauty!

The over-whelming brass vibrations – as if through water – swell and roar through the spheres in the sonic correspondence to **Nag Champa** incense up your nostrils, fine-tuning your senses for the ride to high-time spirituality in very clear and spacious thought-streams. Beauty at its outer reaches.

Track 4. Digital Signal Processor OR Earthquake [4:35]

The crackling is grey and white, but soon moving into dried-up chunks of clay, splintering all over your premises, but you must get used to the abruptness of sections, the sound cutting off in loudness, immediately starting again (but changed) on a lower volume. This is a hasty play on white noise, somewhat like a contemporary

development of **Jan W. Morthenson's** **Neutron Star** from 1967. The first seconds are galloping!

Track 5. Still Random OR Burial of Music [5:23]

Here we go into a half-breed area; half of the music recalling an early electronic culture of a German guttural kind wrapped in a French kind of sonic poetry – and this paired with a bouncing late 1990s' electronica motion that moves like the shadow of a train in moonlight across the fields of **Southern Sweden** in February. **Rothkamm** manages the harsh and the sweet simultaneously, and I even hear the dreams of **Herbert Eimert** and **Henri Pousseur** flaking by here, in stolen moments. Outlandish!

Track 6. Digital Feedback OR Highland [3:17]

This tune provides one of those moments that are **Rothkamm's** specialty; playing contemporary music in a methodology of decades past. Here he achieves the most exciting and investigative, exploring sound, which clearly has the mark of our days, but which also very clearly takes up a tradition of the electronic music of the 1950s, echoing and shadowing the boys of **Cologne**. It's a mastery of the trade to be able to invest in this without getting lost in the past, and without just landing in a pastiche.

On top of this, the composer paints a sonic picture of great, incisive beauty with these old brushes. It's time to listen again, and yet for the first time, to a kind of music that brings both the charm and familiarity of the old, with an alien and unforeseen fragrance of something new.

Track 7. Sine++ OR Compass [5:14]

A round descends on all of me, making me dizzy, like sitting in the back of a bus as the sound of the engine starts to wear off on the hull of the vehicle, traveling down your seat and into the floor and back, swallowing your voice into a fragile equilibrium of disappearances.

I'm flying a probe in **Sine++ OR Compass**, whether through Antarctic ice a million years back (down three kilometers) or through deep, uncharted levels of consciousness, I don't know. The deep, dizzying drone eventually emits whistling figures that rise like solar flares or wobble like unsure intentions.

Again, this is old style electronic music (this section 1970-ish!), but, as before, in a new, contemporary way that makes your ears grow. It's rough in a polished way, incredibly!

Track 8. XFM OR New Encounter Architecture [3:20]

Industrial noise at its best, waking you up in a giant hall, two kilometers long, half a kilometer wide, 100 meters high, large overhead traveling cranes moving about up in the dusty haze, their spotlights spreading cones ahead of them as they move their heavy loads.

The machinery in this **Kingdom of Production** pours its many individual machinery voices into the grandness of the hall, appearing as one dusty, poisonous cloud of noise, overtone-rich, encompassing anonymous sound-worlds from white to grey to black, the visual aspect glittering with myriads of floating metal dust grains. The sudden shadows cast by welding flames fly up across the walls, into the darkness under the ceiling, like flaring bolts of lightning, goblin people stooping over their tasks down on the floor, diffuse in haze and smoke.

XFM OR New Encounter Architecture reminds me of an LP called **UGN** (OWEN or FURNACE) from 1992 by Swedish enfants terrible **Leif Elggren**, **Per Jonsson** and **Kent Tankred**, or something by the noise and dread group **The Too Much Too Soon Orchestra** – and as usual on this CD, **Rothkamm** takes this tradition and furthers it,

provides it into something even much better that the music from the analogies I provide. Go!

Track 9. Reality OR Room in Hollywood [3:19]

Here I feel like I'm in some kind of vehicle, perhaps a train or a subway car. Some kind of wheezing and humming machinery is heard, and I more feel than hear the reflections of human voices, unintelligible conversations which can't be made out – and also some kind of distributed audio that could pass for music; music through the wall, muffled, disoriented, disorienting... and then I hear for sure that people are speaking. I could be hiding behind a cheese counter at a super-market, ducking down, hearing the consumers chatting in the aisles outside in the store.

And then at the end I hear a film projector, and old kind.

Reality OR Room in Hollywood is some kind of civilization debris, a taste of something incomprehensible, yet quite cozy.

Track 10. Bellsine OR Ascent out of LAX [4:00]

This concluding piece introduces a gradual swelling, which soon takes on a luminous, up-spiraling motion of bells swaggering this way and that, heard through some kind of fluid, albeit not water, but a kind of fluid that has properties unknown to us; a fluid which isn't "wet", but which otherwise retains all the qualities of water. Through this strange fluid I feel my anatomy traveling, on these **Salvador Dali** bells, contracting and expanding, wobbling like great soap bubbles on the wind. Alien beauty.

Summing it up, **Frank Rothkamm** has delivered a CD where all the tracks are unlike each other, where each piece has its very own sound world, its very own characteristics, and where all the compositions reveals a high-end, top-of-the line intricacy and fabulous beauty. **Rothkamm** has gone through a rapid and almost overwhelming development, now residing with the masters of the trade.

His music is strange and beautiful. **Frank Rothkamm** is a poet dressed in a technician's overall.



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