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Hi Guys-

Here' the Robin Guthrie review and some pix. Swooshy stuff.

I took the photos myself, so don't sweat the photographer credits.

Talk soon, Big P

Robin Guthrie
Gagarin Club, Liossion

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Robin Guthrie: The Evolution Revolution

Former Cocteau Twin guitarist, sound engineer and video artist Robin Guthrie is one of the most talented, approachable and genuinely low profile guys in the music industry. His one-man audio-visual concert at Gagarin club on Liossion avenue last Friday was the quintessence of selflessness and inconspicuous manner for a live practitioner of the performing arts. Armed with a laptop computer, one hardbody electric guitar and sound treatment effects up the wazoo, a man who looks like an 8th grade Geometry teacher completely mesmerized the crowd with his latest atmospherically-themed, instrumental compositions. Behind Guthrie on stage was a large projection screen, on which his latest visual-art film piece, *Galerie*, was shown during the performance.

The 55-minute video-work is a seamless montage of images which loosely chronicles the evolution of nearly everything in the cosmos. Beginning with a simple seascape, the work progresses through single-frame icons of animals, tools, cultural centers, shoes, technological circuitry board stuff and finally changes into monochromatic, Mark Rothko-esque energy fields and blobs. The piece fits like a glove to the ambient guitar work and never seems incongruous to the musical element of the performance.

Musically and technically, Guthrie is masterful at the delicate art of using multi-effect treatments on his guitar. Occasionally, music critics will scoff at musicians who use great amounts of electronic gadgetry in their compositions, claiming that they hide behind curtains of loops and sequences to cover for musical inability. Sometimes this phenomenon does happen, and the guitarists who do hide behind pre-fab, instant technology tend to come and go fairly quickly.

Using effects to their fullest advantage, and getting them to do exactly what you want them to do, is an art form unto itself. Here is where Guthrie's producer/engineering background comes into full bloom. It is true that he does not manually play piles of notes and complex musical structures. However, he does have the master's touch when it comes to adding delay, octaves and harmonic notches to simple pieces, transforming them into complex, yet still listener accessible, audio delights.

Live, he plays pieces from his two latest film soundtrack scores. Both Dany Saadia's *3:19* and Gregg Araki's *Mysterious Skin* contain his signature oceanic swells, sub-heartrate sweeps and melodic, notched loops which have a remarkably relaxing and pleasant effect on the listener. You can practically feel the serotonin being dumped into your blood stream as one lets the piece aurally wash over them. His songs never have the saccharine, self-appointed importance of other new-age composers like Yanni or John Tesh, and still remain playful, hypnotic and academic all at the same time.

Rock and pop bands tend to be very ephemeral creatures. A good percentage of the time, one guy is the creative source of the music and the other members are basically lucky to have found him. It's been seen endless times in the past: David Bowie with the Spiders, Rob Zombie with White Zombie, Brian Wilson with the Beach Boys, Pete Townshend with The Who, etc. Going solo gives them the creative freedom to do what they want, as other band members will rarely have the same enthusiasm for a project as its creator. However, there are always risks and great costs as one must hire studio and touring musicians who are capable players and will do what they are told. Also, audiences are used to the artist's previous products, and going too far from their expectations can lose listeners as easily as gain new ones. Robin Guthrie has evolved gracefully from atmosphere-pop with the Cocteau Twins to an individual, atmosphere soundtrack creator. And, remarkably, he can do it all by himself. He's a solo-act that is really a solo-act; from soup to nuts he's the entire show. If someone had told me I'd be completely captivated by watching a middle-aged guy diddle with his laptop and play one guitar, I'd have said they were crazy. But that was indeed the case, and the show was one of the best I've seen in the past many months.

Finally, kudos must be given to the management at Gagarin 205 club for having the genuine balls to bring-in diverse, lesser-known talents and supporting local bands. Nikos Triandafilidis and Thomas Mahairas are some of the few guys in town with the vision and courage to put their money and love of music where their mouth is, and give people shows they can't find anywhere else in the city. If you like diversity in music and having the option of seeing bands that otherwise would never come to Athens, then they should be fully supported by the concert-going public for their efforts.