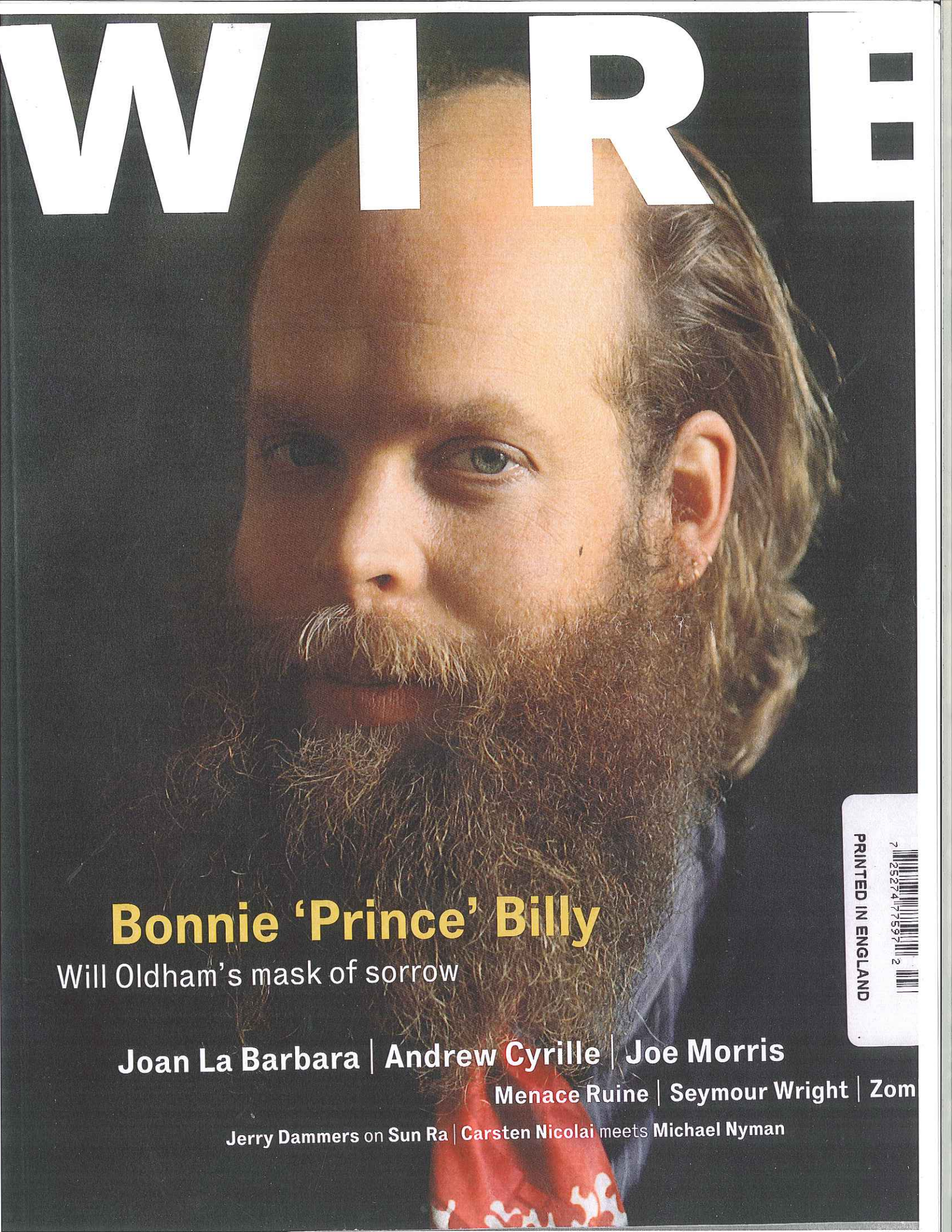


# WIRE



## Bonnie 'Prince' Billy

Will Oldham's mask of sorrow

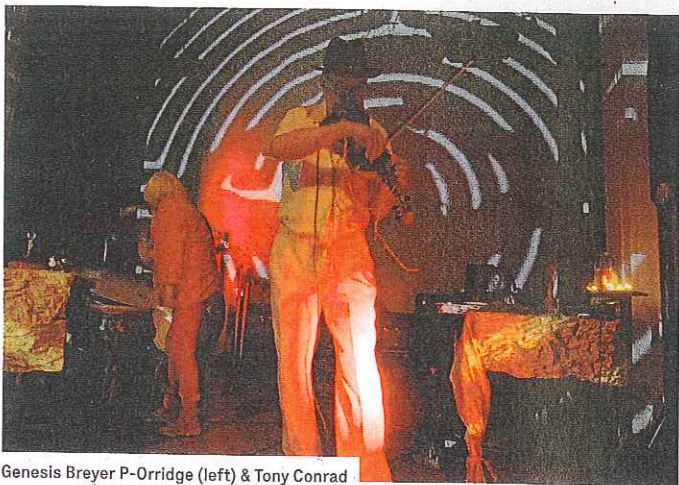
Joan La Barbara | Andrew Cyrille | Joe Morris

Menace Ruine | Seymour Wright | Zom

Jerry Dammers on Sun Ra | Carsten Nicolai meets Michael Nyman

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Genesis Breyer P-Orridge (left) & Tony Conrad

### Tony Conrad & Genesis Breyer P-Orridge

Issue Project Room, New York, USA  
A little piece of history was lived here, when Tony Conrad, dream syndicator, and Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, pandrogynous performer, came together in concert for the first time thanks to an idea of Marie Losier, the director of *Tony Conrad DreaMinimalist*. The two violin players were accompanied on percussion by Edward Morrissey, whose drumming, even though it provided a steady pulse throughout the performance, played second fiddle during the concert.

The Issue Project Room has been through some rough times, but all's well that ends well, and in the very near future noisemakers and artists will have a new home for experimentation in a historic, landmark building in downtown Brooklyn. In its current location, IPR boasts a high ceilinged, loft-like room that can pack in about 100 people – a capacity that was definitely exceeded, given the extra, makeshift space on the ground that was allotted to those not able to grab a seat, and who were only a few inches away from the performers.

Clad in a gold, checked zoot suit and with the addition of hanging white tassels and a fedora-like hat, Conrad maximised the visual effect of the quasi-ritualistic performance without, however, reducing it to faux pagan kitsch. The videos projected on the wall (images of entomological splendour, marine biology and pulsating lights) overlapped with the live filming of the performance and the real-time processing of the feed that created a perfect, psychedelic backdrop for the three improvising musicians.

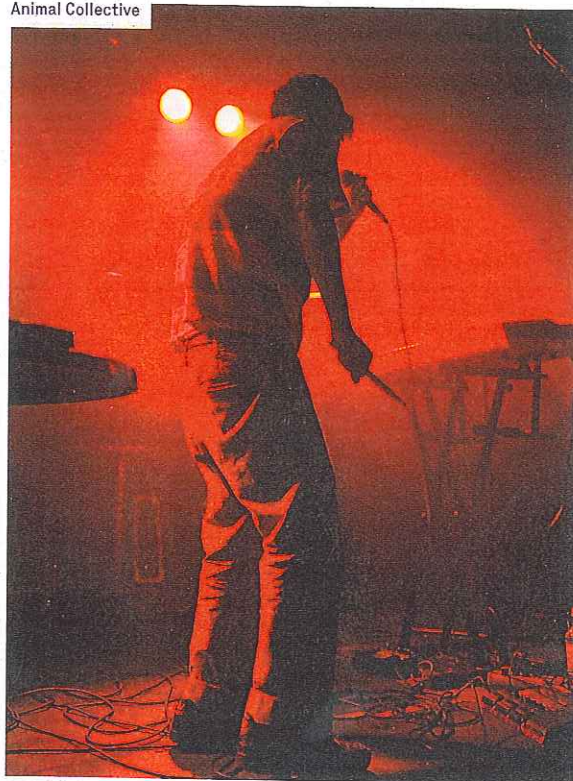
For their first, long set, Conrad kept looping delicate phrases that Genesis assaulted with her overdriven violin. For much of the performance, Genesis had his back turned to the audience, not as an act of disrespect towards anyone, but more as a gesture of an artist consumed with his own playing. He had connected

his glittering electric violin to delay and distortion pedals that were responsible for the barrage of construction site-like noises produced with an even, gentle touch. Conrad made more use of the space around him, bowing and devising short, imperceptible dance solos as he shuffled towards and away from Genesis, whereas his colleague worked on the fingerboard and the rest of the violin in a lively, kinetic and, at times, aggressive manner. It was towards the end of the first set when the chemistry between the two artists became obvious. Conrad, half impishly and half majestically, sounded the end of the first part by ringing a bell, and Genesis responded in a madcap, self-deprecatory way, jingling some other bells and prancing like a joker – an image sustained, in part, by his hot pink outfit.

You could tell that their improvisation was based on the genuinely playful interaction between the two, and far from being only a meeting of two musicians, it was in most part through their bodily discourse – especially Genesis's cartoonish display of affection for Conrad and the latter's own mime-like fluent movements – that the performance gained more momentum.

The second part of the concert started somewhat unevenly, with Conrad playing with a series of toy guitars, but culminated in a rhythm-driven crescendo that found Genesis banging on a drum and Conrad scraping a few pieces of loose wire appended on his violin. For the short encore, the semi-liturgical aspect of the concert was heightened and highlighted by Genesis's clockwork movement, an assemblage of repetitive gyrations – with the hand holding the bow extended towards his violin and striking it. Conrad's final jerky bounces, with his violin in one hand and a bell in the other, acted as a reminder that humorous interplay between the two performers was their true lingua franca. Stefanos Tsigrimanis

### Animal Collective



### Animal Collective

Concorde 2, Brighton, UK  
The first time I saw Animal Collective they were a mere duo, their arsenal confined to vocals and acoustic guitars. Even then, however, the demented yelps and soundboard slaps suggested a pair heading away from the arrow-straight trajectory of the traditional singer-songwriter. Half a decade later, they've swollen to a quartet and outgrown their Baltimore base, with members now dispersed across continents. They've also expanded dramatically in terms of instrumental palette: once frequently compared to The Beach Boys and Incredible String Band, Sam Davies (in *The Wire* 299) detected hints of Steve Reich and Minimal Techno in their latest album *Merrweather Post Pavilion*.

In the UK to promote that record, their ninth (and most hysterically anticipated) to date, the only guitar on stage is electric, and even that is used for no more than a third of the set. One member, Deakin, has opted to sit out the album and accompanying tour, and the group have stated that his temporary absence inspired a shift away from guitars. While 2007's *Strawberry Jam* was also a heavily electronic record, tonight – as on the new album – the samples are more organic in origin, the end results lighter, almost effervescent in tone. As ever, breaking through the haze are the vocals of Avey Tare and Panda Bear, their harmonies indeed calling to mind The Beach Boys although running the gamut from childlike vulnerability to the crazed, wordless howling of men possessed. This is Brian (or Dennis) Wilson superimposed upon thoroughly contemporary post-psychedelia.

The fractal, shimmering highs sit on top of a satisfyingly insistent bottom end as well as occasionally propulsive, even primal rhythms. (Both singers have stripped down drum kits behind them on stage, although in most instances the beats are provided, presumably, by Geologist, standing stage right and sporting trademark head-torch throughout.) As expected, there's a good deal of inter-song improvisation and several tracks segue into one another, the result notably more sprawling than the record. Yet *Merrweather Post Pavilion* is still, supposedly, Animal Collective's 'accessible' album, and tunes such as "Also Frightened" and "Summertime Clothes" have a pop sensibility that is even more evident in a live setting than in home listening.

Though in truth the opening couple of numbers feel slightly flat tonight, the barely interrupted stream of music fast gathers momentum. Much of the music is presumably pre-programmed to some extent, but one still senses that vital element of onstage risk; equally vital is the sheer abandon of the twin vocalists and the trio's palpable ability to respond to a noisily enthusiastic crowd. Long before the eventual climax, they've proved themselves almost as spectacular on stage as they are in the studio.

Given the hype – the 'gifted geeks' even warranted a substantial feature in *The Sun* – there's most likely a backlash around the corner. But for the moment, let us give thanks that Animal Collective have managed to create that most elusive of musics, both entirely credible and ebulliently, even ecstatically upbeat. Deakin must be kicking himself. Marcus O'Dair