



# GABBY FLUKE-MOGUL

## CONTINUUM OF ENDLESS BIRTH

BY SOPHIA VALERA HEINECKE

Violinist, improviser, composer gabby fluke-mogul's earliest memory of sound tracks back through the Florida Everglades: "I would play with another child there," they recall. "We'd walk hand-in-hand on the boardwalk in silence and look up at the cypress trees. I can remember the sound of our feet on the creaky platforms, the shifting trees, the endless swamp sounds." Expansively engulfed in the continuum of the past, they are brought to act on what they hear is needed in the present.

Even as a young person in Florida, fluke-mogul always worked with children—a work that continues to inform the musician's aspect of improvisation through a multiplicity of meanings, especially when thinking about the work of Ornette Coleman: "I've listened to Ornette with so many little ones throughout time," they say. fluke-mogul is known to engage Coleman's Harmolodics in practice and in theory. Coleman described Harmolodics as a pivotal strategy for living, "like a color, a word without gender" and this is how the emotional landscape of fluke-mogul's work feels too—chest-baring, gut-wrenching—a spectrum of their singular body yet never confined to identity labels. Their soundscapes combine with knowledge as a doula and an organizer, giving the feeling that birth can simultaneously be a discrete physical event and a momentous occasion.

Memory and birth are universal continuums, and so is queerness. According to fluke-mogul, any kind of birth, whether it's creative or a baby, involves dealing with intersectional systems of oppression, especially for Black people and other marginalized people in this country; and consciously or unconsciously many other relationships situationally present the same: with the body, with an instrument, people one loves, people that present conflict, ancestors, spirit, trauma, vibration, bardos—and deep listening. The continuum of the Creative Music Studio (CMS), founded in 1971 by Coleman, vibraphonist-pianist Karl Berger and vocalist Ingrid Sertso, where fluke-mogul is currently Executive Director, takes particular care in stewarding liveness, which former artistic director (and drummer-percussionist) Billy Martin sees as "evolving and shaping the heart and the brain" of CMS. New collaborations form spontaneously through CMS at Open Box hosted at Ibeam Brooklyn. The Open Box format, where names drawn from a hat birth trios that play for ten minutes, is a practice that fluke-mogul learned from Art Ensemble of Chicago saxophonist-composer Roscoe Mitchell and "not a new form at all," they say. "People have been picking names and making music spontaneously for a long time! Sometimes there's 40 people at Ibeam, such a rich environment for teaching and learning, with really different ways of creating containers for that type of experience." Guitarist Ava Mendoza speaks to Open Box as one of fluke-mogul's pivotal contributions to the ecosystem of improvisation, one

that draws "improvisers passing through, younger folks just getting out of school, frequent audience members happy for a chance to play, working musicians in other genres who want an opportunity to play free, and CMS regulars as well. Many people have met each other at Open Box. fluke-mogul cares tremendously about the community and knows how to organize and lead." Mendoza, testifying to this cross-pollination, notes there are many more queer and trans folks, more diversity in general since fluke-mogul became involved.

Birth work is part of everything that fluke-mogul does, felt in the spectrum of textures on *LOVE SONGS*, a favorite album of their Endless Breakfast bandmate Mariá Portugal. "It's really bold," Portugal notes. "There's a continuum between fluke-mogul's work as a musician, teacher, organizer, and doula, which reflects a view of creation as a process within—and indistinguishable from—nature itself. This is a radically different vision from that of the establishment, which often sees creation as a domination of nature and therefore views humans and nature as something separate and even opposite." Lately, when fluke-mogul sits down to write or think about music, the James Baldwin quote, first published in 1980 in *The Nation*, comes to mind as they witness the atrocities in Gaza, Sudan, Congo... "The children are always ours, every single one of them, all over the globe; and I am beginning to suspect that whomever is incapable of recognizing this may be incapable of morality." They stress that the music they're making, with the people they are creating it with, is a format for resistance. Says gabby, "For years, violinist Charles Burnham said 'Put a band together. What about that threat of a band?'" The Thread (with Burnham, bassist Luke Stewart, drummer-percussionist Tcheser Holmes, Mendoza and fluke-mogul) play this month at Art for Arts' annual Vision Festival at Roulette, actualizing the many threads that connect all people through a unique vision.

What Stewart appreciates most about this effort is fluke-mogul's "reverence for tradition and those iconoclasts who came before, acknowledging there is nothing new about any of this." He adds that doing the work of reaching out, connecting with Deep Listening® founder Pauline Oliveros (1932-2016) or Burnham, who made this music possible, has been invaluable, especially since Burnham comes from the experimental lineage in Black music, going back to the '60s. fluke-mogul also expresses gratitude for the elders who have trusted them with their time, energy and wisdom throughout life: "One of the last conversations I had with Pauline was in 2016. I was really struggling. I remember asking her what I should do. She responded, 'gabby! You're already doing what you need to be doing! We gotta keep on keepin' on, just like we always have!'" fluke mogul adds that they are always aware that they are a guest in the continuum of great Black music, music from the

African diaspora. On the subject of queerness they have a deep respect for Black queer women in the music, art and philosophy, from Ma Rainey to Audre Lorde to adrienne maree brown, who changed and continue to change the world. There is an acknowledgment that nothing is required more than being and creating an "emergent strategy," a birth itself.

"Improvising is relational," fluke-mogul asserts. "Relationships are really important to me—all the parts of them, including conflict and repair." The interwoven currents that fluke-mogul picks up, whether visible or invisible, are real, connecting listeners to one another across timelines to bridge generations in organizing and musicianship.

For more info visit [flukemogul.com](http://flukemogul.com). fluke-mogul is at Vision Festival at Roulette Jun. 3 (with *The Thread*), 300 Ashland Plaza Jun. 14 (with *Anh Vo's Possessed*), Bowery Ballroom Jun. 21 (with Bill Orcutt and Lily Finnegan), *The Perch* Jun. 23, and Ibeam Brooklyn Jun. 29 (part of the Open Box CMS Workshop). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.

### Recommended Listening

- gabby fluke-mogul—*LOVE SONGS* (Relative Pitch, 2021)
- gabby fluke-mogul, Matteo Liberatore, Joanna Mattrey, Ava Mendoza—*Death in the Gilded Age* (Tripticks Tapes, 2021)
- gabby fluke-mogul/Dave Rempis—*Lip* (Aerophonic, 2022)
- gabby fluke-mogul/Nava Dunkelmann—*Likht* (Relative Pitch, 2022)
- Loren Connors & Chris Cochrane—*Artemesia* (Infrequent Seams, 2023)
- gabby fluke-mogul/Lily Finnegan—*Throw It In The Sink* (Sonic Transmissions, 2023)

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