

The Amazing Buddha Machine

Dr. Thanatos of Ann Arbor

For the Full Moon (01.03.07 C.E.)

FM3 is an experimental music group comprised of Christiaan Virant and Zhang Jian. They are based in China and began recording in 1999. They are famous for inventing the “Buddha Machine” a low-tech device that loops few-second pieces of ambient music continuously. These devices were originally used only for their own compositions, however the device is now available for commercial sale. It looks something like a modern iPod combined with a transistor radio. It is available in six colors and plays nine tracks. The loops are minimalist samples of traditional Chinese instruments, and the device was inspired by real music boxes used to provide background for meditation in actual temples.

In addition to several recordings of these loops by FM3, there is a bit of a “Buddha Machine” fad currently going on with two remix albums just being released. The first is by Robert Henke called “Layering Buddha” and the second is by Various Artists called “Jukebox Buddha”. Both records use the original FM3 loops as source material, but the musicians on Jukebox Buddha especially often deviate considerably from the ambience provided by the Buddha Machine. They remain, nonetheless, interesting experimental compositions and reflect the avant garde or cutting edge of modern electronic music.

[The Jukebox Buddha release was recently used as segue music on The Frequency Mutineers (01.06.07). In fact, we have all the material mentioned here available in our archive, and we will gladly play it on request.]

Artist/Release/Label/Date

FM3/Buddha Machine/Staalplaat/02.16.06

Robert Henke/Layering Buddha/Imbalance Computer/11.07.06

[Various Artists]/Jukebox Buddha/Staubgold/11.07.06