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Sounds

At Times, We Don't Have To Suffer For Their Art

By DAVID BROWNE

ALL IT (KEITH) HARING'S SYNdrome. The symptoms are easy to detect. After years of laboring under intimations of art, members of the Lower Manhattan art/rock community decide they'd like their work to be more accessible to the Great Unwashed. This craving takes the form of making concert movies (Laurie Anderson's "Home of the Brave"), playing melodic rock 'n' roll instead of experimental noodlings (the Golden Palominos' last two albums), or even remaking rock classics (downtown drummer David Van Tieghem just covered the old Iron Butterly classic "In-a-Gadda-da-Vida").

In case you're worried that everything stemming from Lower Manhattan is suffering from Haring's Syndrome, one need only listen to the just-released "John Cage Meets Sun Ra." A more ideal example of the love-it-or-hate-it world of experimental music could not be found. The album alternates between jazzman Ra indulging in horror-movie electronic keyboard noises, and avant-garde composer Cage making strangulated chanting sounds with his vocal chords.

"John Cage Meets Sun Ra" is not an album for the tolerant among us—but then, that's part of the charm of experimental music. At the Bottom Line tomorrow night, Sun Ra will be performing the music of Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson with his Alter-Destiny 21st Century Omniverse Arkestra. That doesn't sound as annoying as his Cage collaboration, but one never knows. After all, at a time when Laurie Anderson's face is plastered across print ads for American Express, we need a few artists immune to Haring's Syndrome.