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## Spark fest sure to ignite passion for electronic wizardry

ROSS RAIHALA

Experimental electronic music can be thrilling, challenging and bizarre. And, sometimes, it can be a bookish guy simply standing behind a bank of synthesizers pushing buttons for an hour.

Expect to see all facets of the genre explored during the fourth annual **Spark Festival of Electronic Music and Art** at the University of Minnesota. The event kicks off Tuesday with cover stars Electropolis providing the live score to "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" and continues through Feb. 26 with a full schedule of performances, multimedia installations, lectures and master classes.

Nearly all of the events, which are detailed online at [www.spark.cla.umn.edu](http://www.spark.cla.umn.edu), are free and open to the public.

Some of the names will be familiar to more mainstream music fans. Like **Scanner** (born Robin Rimbaud), the British DJ/composer who earned notoriety in the mid-'90s for creating songs that incorporated bits and pieces of mobile phone conversations plucked from the air using the equipment from which he took his name.

He'll present a keynote speech and participate in an onstage interview Wednesday. But the selling point is four artists performing live in New York and sending it over the Internet. Then, Scanner will mix the multiple feeds into a single stream in front of an audience (and back over the Internet).

Former and current ravers will want to check out the panel discussion on the history and future of rave culture Feb. 25, while musicmakers of many stripes will be interested in next Thursday's chat about the Internet's role in music distribution.

The most potentially fascinating material from the festival may well come from 74-year-old composer **Alvin Lucier**, a pioneer in examining the totality of a musical performance, from the physical movements of the artists to the acoustics of the room in which the music is produced. One of his most famous pieces, "Music for Solo Performer," amplified his brain waves and used the signal to trigger a series of percussion instruments. He'll speak Wednesday, and several of his works will be performed next weekend.

### IN THE CLUBS

The Fine Line kicked off its **Brew and View** series — which pairs a cult, or at least culty film, with an appropriate local band — to great success last month with "Xanadu" and E.L.No. The second installment tonight features "The Aristocrats" — last year's documentary about a bunch of comedians telling the same filthy joke — with Chooglin', which features two members of the late Midnight Evils.

**Trampled by Turtles** debut their "Live at Luce" disc Friday at First Avenue with the White Iron Band and Retribution Gospel Choir.

Canadian singer/songwriter **David Francey**, who records for St. Paul's Red House Records label, returns to town for his second-ever local gig Saturday at the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis. Francey has won a pair of Juno Awards, Canada's version of the Grammy.

**High on Stress** and **Fitzgerald** play the Terminal Bar on Saturday with **Kevin Bowe** (the Jonny Lang/Shannon Curfman collaborator who most recently played guitar on Paul

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Westerberg's tour).

Minnesota Public Radio launches the four-date Singer Songwriters Women's Series on Saturday with **Christine Lavin** and **Claudia Schmidt** at the Fitzgerald Theater. Upcoming installments feature **Tracy Bonham** and **Martha Wainwright** (March 11), **Ann Reed** (April 8) and a May 27 multiartist gig with **Haley Bonar**, **Desdamona**, **JoAnna James**, **Karen Paurus** and host **Leslie Ball**.

Cowboy poet and early "Prairie Home Companion" star **Pop Wagner** plays the Hat Trick Lounge in downtown St. Paul on Sunday. He has a new CD out that's dubbed "Cinchin' Saddles and Pullin' Bridle Reins."

A pair of much-loved acts favored by the Current crowd — **Matt Pond PA** and **Dios (Malos)** — play an 18-and-older gig Tuesday at the Varsity Theater. That same venue hosts angel-voiced local crooner (who also gets plenty of Current airplay) **Jeff Hanson** on Sunday with Southerly. Hanson plans to enter the studio soon with an eye toward putting out a new album by the fall.

Pop Music Critic Ross Raihala can be reached at rraihala@pioneerpress.com or 651-228-5553. Read more about the local music scene on his blog, "The Ross Who Knew Too Much," at www.twin.cities.com.

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