

Kleier defines rules in sound world of his own

Concert: Roger Kleier electric guitar and electronics. Het Apollohuis,
Eindhoven, the Netherlands

The electric guitar is an instrument that lends itself to macho display. High speed riffs, overwhelming volume, the trick of one-hand playing, constitute the most momentous attractions of many a guitarist. All very impressive, but musically not very significant, let alone ground-breaking. There are exceptions, such as Jim O'Rourke who appears to subject his instrument to a painstaking internal examination. Roger Kleier takes his guitar outside the beaten track as well, as he demonstrated in Het Apollohuis last Tuesday. A prominent feature in Kleier's performance is a sampler that allows him to put down different fragments, which he calls up at will in continuous repetition. He can combine several excerpts into tight sound textures. It was fascinating to watch how he accomplished that: he might play a melody or what sounded like a haphazard sequence of tones, trapped them as if in a lasso, and while the fragment grew into an ongoing ground pattern, Kleier had already moved on to shape a new melody from which he again caught a fragment. In this way he weaved gloriously beautiful tapestries in which you would happily lose yourself - until the guitarist abruptly broke them off, immediately to depart in a new direction, or to sit smiling in the unexpected silence, awaiting the response from the audience.

Kleier proved to be a very versatile musician, who could conjure up captivating melodies, but could just as easily work his guitar with sticks, lids and a brush, and did not wish to stay away from the grittier capacities of the instrument. What I found remarkable was that the strings tended to get increasingly detuned, without making the music sound out of tune. Kleier lays down the rules in his own sound world. These may deviate from what is generally held to be acceptable, but they result in music that is far more exciting and imaginative than compositions that follow the rules of convention.

--René van Peer