

# 23 YEARS OF CAROLINER

CURATED BY MARCELLA FAUSTINI, SARRITA HUNN, AND THE MUSEUM OF VIRAL MEMORY

## 23 YEARS OF HERNIA MILK AND ERGOT DREAMS: A RETROSPECTIVE OF CAROLINER AND ITS HOMAGE TO A 19TH CENTURY SINGING BULL

December 13, 2006 - January 19th, 2007  
Wed., Thurs., and Sat. 12-3pm. or by appt.

Echo de Pensees Sound Series in conjunction with The Museum of Viral Memory presents, *23 Years of Hernia Milk and Ergot Dreams*, the first ever opportunity to see the internationally recognized band Caroliner's extensive ephemera (propitious props, salutary sets, corrupted costumes, random releases, maligned missives, reviled relics and loquacious lyric books) collected in one place!

Caroliner was formed in San Francisco in 1983 when a ragtag band of temporally misplaced troubadours ran afoul of an astrally displaced gang of misbehaved minstrels. Initial violence blossomed from a dead bull ghost into corporate confusion when deep inside a mould induced hallucination they copyrighted the original songs of a singing bull, Caroliner, who was tragically killed and eaten by its starved owner in the mythic age of 1833.

Taking ergot-poisoned pills through a Wisconsin death trip, the group began recreating their hallucinatory dream state through hypnotic sound, flamboyant costumes, and glowing props. Two decades later they are still digging through Caroliner's prodigious aural drop-pings with day-glo miner's helmets and home made shovels of calcium-welded bone. The sounds are a heady mix of toxic shock and shocking talk, folk confusion and percussive dissolution.

For *Hernia Milk and Ergot Dreams* concerned folks have dug through the group's checkered past and black-light warehouse to choose the cream of the crop of 23



years of Caroliner props, costumes, instruments, records, books, flyers and assorted other detritus. A closing reception will be held January 13th with Caroliner's first performance in a year and a half at PLAYSPACE's adjacent complex California College of the Arts' Graduate Center in San Francisco.

23 Years of Hernia Milk and Ergot Dreams exposes Caroliner's tragic trail of tears through the American dream and across the world.

Closing Reception: Saturday, January 13th, 6-8pm  
Caroliner performance starting at 8pm  
with Luz Alibi and Georgio Marauder, Theresin Barney, and Ploc Munster



## Ergot Dreams

ST. ANTHONY'S FIRE



"A great plague of swollen blisters consumed the people by a loathsome rot so that their limbs were loosened and fell off before death.", one 9th century writer described of an outbreak of 'St. Anthony's Fire'.

St. Anthony's Fire, named for the patron saint of fire, has symptoms that include not only burning sensation in the hands and feet, hallucinations, and gangrene in the extremities but also extreme psychosis and even death. Since treatment for this infliction was not possible in the Middle Ages victims had to cope with the sensation of being burned at the stake as their fingers, toes, hands and feet slowly dropped off. Matthias Grünewald's 16th-century *Isenheim Altarpiece*, located at The Order of St. Anthony which provided care for these patients, infamously glorified this suffering and offered comfort to those afflicted with the dreaded disease.

### ERGOTISM

The cause of St. Anthony's Fire, ergot poisoning or ergotism, was not identified until the 17th century. Ergot is a fungus that grows on rye grass that consequentially contaminates the flour used in making rye bread. Mass ergotism began to appear in the Middle Ages when rye became widely cultivated for food in Central and Eastern Europe where cold damp growing conditions, predominant in France and Germany, promoted fungal growth. Repeated epidemics occurred and often entire villages would be affected by bread made from contaminated rye.

Outbreaks of 'dancing mania' that occurred between the 13th and 16th centuries have sometimes been attributed to ergotism induced psychedelic psychosis. Women tried as witches and the children who appeared to be possessed by them, could have ingested stale rye bread upon which the ergot fungus had grown and consequentially think and act as though they were inflicted by the devil. It is believed that ergot poisoning may have also played a role in outbreaks of 'witchcraft' during colonial times in New England, most notably the Salem Witch Trials of 1692.

### CAROLINER

Documented in such novels as *Wisconsin Death Trip*, St. Anthony's Fire made it's way to the final frontier of the American West. In that sometimes exciting, sometimes tragic period of the 1800's there arose a magnificent singing bull named Caroliner. This bull could sing any song that was sung to him and consequently picked up many of the songs sang by the folks he encountered during his

travels around mining camps for money. Times were hard though, even for a singing bull, and during an extra difficult winter his owner, Dire Hunger, had to cut up Caroliner and eat him to stay alive. She wrapped herself in the skin to keep warm and...it kept on singing.

Manifesting their destiny in San Francisco, an appreciation society of the 1800s via ergot evidence (and history in general) rediscovered Caroliner's long lost songs and copyrighted them in 1983 forming the foundation of the unevenly baroque clothed and wallpapered mess that is Caroliner Rainbow Compost Axis Points To Luxury. Drawing from the ergot poisoned dreams that surely infected the songs of those miners (and anyone it came across), the group set out to pay homage to this magnificent bull and his undying legacy. For the last 23 years Caroliner Rainbow Hernia Milk Queen has traveled throughout the Northern Hemisphere singing Caroliner songs and inducing states of 19th century mentality. This exhibition and accompanying performance provides a unique opportunity to view many of the effects of these adventures. -s.hunn



## Hernia Milk



CONSIDERATIONS ON THE QUEEN AND HER  
MIRACULOUS ELIXIR THE HERNIA MILK

Amidst Caroliner's many narrations, one of much peculiarity concerns the Hernia Milk Queen (hi)story.

### Who is she and what is it?

The Queen seems to be a quite elusive figure to pinpoint. For a while much talk circulated regarding a connection to Mary Shelly. Erroneously so, since hernia milk is not quite the same as the electricity that bolted the monster from its slumber.

Another theory has connections to contemporary north-eastern Brasil by way of a Dr. Fritz. A legendary spectral presence, his human puppets and their mix of iodine, turpentine, and serpentine have been making head waves for years in re-animation circles. By way of coloration this concoction seems very much in line with Caroliner's descriptions of hernia milk more so than other previously suggested elixirs. However, although Estonian, Dr. Fritz was never a queen.

The most widely accepted hypothesis does have a South American connection by way of Africa. As the many powers conceded to the Yoruba mythological figure, Eshu, the most intriguing one was the power of multiplication/re-animation. It is said that from a herniated disk dropped during an animated jig session, the Pomba Gira Rainha das Sete Encruzilhadas (Pomba Gira Queen of the Seven

Crossroads) was brought into this world.

The Queen was endowed with the capacity to understand all creatures, high and low and in between. She also held the multiplication powers of Eshu, although because herself being a copy already, these powers were highly flawed. She took a husband on each crossroad, but in a very hurried manner, leading to some very poor choices. All the men were missing a body part or another, leading the Queen to come up with an elixir that would re-animate roadkill body parts she found in her frequent crossroads trips.

Hernia milk has gained recognition as the premier re-animating elixir for disconnected body organs/parts. Its properties are many but mainly its capacity to renew patois for severed body parts is a fair motive for its unbounded exaltation.

Nowadays through arduous Quimbanda practice, the manufacturing of this substance has become more and more accessible. Zé Arigó, the famous body puppet of Dr. Fritz has been using a giblet cutting technique that has gained more and more followers throughout the years. His innovative practice allows for extraction and manufacturing of the hernia milk in an unguent form. This version of hernia milk can be used ceremoniously on limbs that are still attached for on site multiplication. -*m.faustini* †

### ~ Hernia Milk and the Milk Queen ~

The world is a tablecloth, and dirt is its pride Hernia Milkqueen salted berbucks are the peppered out from the wine cases into South American light. With a hard hitting milk hernia crotch crest carrying trading set down a bull here pick one up milk from that scrote wake the dead piss purple blood porridge I'll match thine wealth another chimney lifted out from its home a bulldust storm like stealth eyebrows raise at the 3 armed speed one arm, a bull, one arm, a handfull of building dirt and one a raised chimney. Shrively heart pump up a new life gleamed raisin eyes yawn out some maggot down to South America where from dead she bring to the Hernia Milkqueen brought up raisin eye danger mommy finger stripe, legs with gut mound hand, Whiskey, and his horse Whisker, and Cabry Silver on the backs a yoke of animal and soil berbucks are a sort who have laboured died before in jungle over land toil dropped dead in tracks buckets of torn flesh trying to take golden coffins tree ointment with heavy milkpiss restoring breath the way to start a new life sides milkpee arrival of the warming chimney with a cabin and a trullet of oxen to protect and eat.

### Carliner Rainbow Words That Shook The Ant Kingdom is:



OBSIDIAN SKELETON  
DISCIPLE NIGHTCONUS  
THE SICKWOOD ADVENTURE  
ODAFIELTHE ADOXI  
BAROO CASKETS NOW/ALSO  
KNOWN AS LOG MOONER  
AND WOUNDED SOBELISK

(and has included): Applehead back pack, American Nail Umbrella, Banjor Lump, The Barn Attic Dullard, The Battling Piglist, Berims, Berjums, Bingo Marvin, Big Mouth Driesuhen, Both Oars, Brazen and Meticulous Pintl, Brown Tools, B'sau Sau, BulkCue, Bullerma, Bullup, Buttercup Lesson, Chance Century, Chapel Rimmer, Chloras (or Chlora), Chicken Climber, Chimney Pinch, Clam'd, Claytonia, Cotty-pearile, Country Thumcake, Croakalypse, Crap Hat Carson, Cudskin, Daydostuffice, Darrieny Diddle O, Dirt Sheet Sue, Doey Bulch, Dobersores, Doxie Goodpatty, Elk Possum, Fawn Brodye, The Felt Pelt, The Four Armed Sheriff From Greenway, The Flying Sluicebox, Gripplea, Gris Welled, Groat Pulp, Grub Caliber, Gumfry Bullcue, Gumfry Pumple Possession, Hack Hack, Ma and Pa Hair Ointment, Harpfart, Herding Pounds, Horsemetia, Horsepimp, Hocrag, Horse Pump, Hotel Crisp Reads, Hug Leg Lesy, The Hundred-Mile Banner Man, The Indian Tongue Wink, Jib Lipprint, The Knowledge Breadboxer, Lake Shore Pelt, Leatherlip Luke, Letter From The Heart Of The Spitstorm, Log Mooner, The Luminous Lump, Log Groom, Loud Amen Cushion, Mangerugg, Mold Certificate, Mittens Samdrags, M.L. Drinurne, The Mole Certificate, Mosie, Old Ben Spayed, Peoplepies, Piddlestick Guillotine, Pinkboy, PudGeist, Pulpy, Puppy Who Wounds, Rarespit, Regurgitotems, Roopy de Rupert, Rungs, Rim and Dot Raisers, Shithouse Papermaid, Silence Eater, Silverbean, Silver Stump, Sink Me Augustus, Slobberhouse Sock, Soakmadill, Sore Pony Lore, Spider Compass, Squire Marvin, Swearing Tar, Testecott, Temperance of the Flies, Threadhold, The Three Padded Brain, Thunder Sun Dung, Timber Amplifier, Tip The Scales My Wayne, Tisco Van, Top Knot Tom, Toothless And Twenty Four, Trusted Knuckleman, The Wells of Wallyton, VA., Vests of Skin, Welcome To The Last Day On Earth, The Western Hand Builder, Woodpatty, William Silverstumps, Yacopper Neckashower, and Yeast Scroll.



***By singing, do you mean Caroliner the Bull actually sang songs or was it more lowing to a tune?***

None of us really know the answer to that, but from all accounts it would sing back anything you were able to sing to it. If you have a bunch of hungry miners coming up from the pit they will have a hundred songs they've been singing to each other all day to keep the sanity flowing. If you shove a parrot into the picture it will take on those same songs into its wing and throat and keep those miners reinforced with shoveling joys. You put a big bull in the picture with even more songs...this horned fella is going to cheer up a lot of people all at once. It's going to bring the sun out in the middle of a hurricane, and turn the dirty pond into some after dinner desert like in the song, "The Taste is Pondee".

***Do you really feel the vibrant colors and fluorescent experience of a Caroliner live set accurately represent life in the American West in the late 19th century?***

Surely, certain descriptions of colors and glows reflect this in literature of pre-1900s disposition. If you pick out a handful of western shoot 'em up novels today some of the sky and campfires are described this way. There are dozens of Caroliner songs that indicate this. Just off the top of our collective noggin' there is "Futile Whasker", "De-Masted Blocked Schooner", "Compost Axis", and "Language of the Eyes and Thread". In written articles you might come across some man with a glowing description, or some young fool suddenly having a glow in the eye. It's all over in 1800s literature. If you couple this with the ergot poisoning that everyone seemed to happen into back then you may have something that looks like the Caroliner singing bull memorial band.

***Why use these tropes of psychedelia to communicate the experience of a Caroliner performance?***

I don't think anyone in the right of mind would use a "trope of psychedelia" as quick as a "troop of shifting, stomping, clashing, 2 plus legged wallpaper" or "handful of 1800s character-denizens parading a parlor room soaked in scream light" to communicate a Caroliner show.

***DIY, why?***

If you have an entire city pointing and laughing at you for two years or more... If you have only a handful of cassettes you need to sell for a vinyl release.... If you have a

budget of the hair on your head and hand-me-down long johns with crack stains on the backside.... I am willing to bet my left arteries -you are probably a do it yourself kind of person just like us.

***Do you feel that through Caroliner some sort of spiritual or mystical connection is achieved with the collective unconscious?***

Well most of the folks we know who come to a show to see us jump and strut have a good idea about it. They stand straight tall taking notes about everything they see. The lyrics of unreleased songs are getting onto notepads in a fast paced manner. The look of the spirit droop eyelid is just a play of dim light and your spectacles. I know of one unconscious woman who took the brunt of a member falling off the ceiling is all. That's tabulation from all these hundreds of live shows collectively.

***Is Caroliner a particularly American experience?***

One would almost possibly say so. The southern-bordered Americas are mentioned as well as cut off crow-damaging Turkish arms in a few songs. Mexican jumping ribs are in another song. The only thing happening that was fantastic and wonderful in the 1800s was the American experience. Dozens of people wrote about it. Hundreds of people talked about it. Thousands sang about it, and Caroliner the bull ended up with most of those sing-a-long ditties stuck in between it's fancy long horns. I would like to hear of a knight band that didn't have a nasty Christian agenda, or a fancy Pasha of Arabia 1800s ensemble that would sing about something other than "that camel has too many teeth" or "there is too much sand in my tent". We all get flustered sometimes there is not a good competition for us on the steamboat we built out of discarded knotholes and woven mole whiskers. It's lonely at the top of the profession, we all agree! If you want to stand in our hooves take a stroll out to a mud puddle, and try having a conversation with it that doesn't end up in a full roundhouse brawl.

***Noise, why?***

Indeed why? There's a solution somewhere in the fall over forest. When we hear a train wreck confusedly coming by us at breakneck speed, or a cow yelping for attention in the early mornings you expect a little bit of training and intelligence behind that mess. We are in covenant with a card gyro-styled stack of wood planks to make it more "musical" for the rest of the world. We are going to have the aging rusted plows of Wabasha County clicking and creaking on either side of the stage, on the ceiling, and in the back of the entrance to the club playing our tunes and working our mud siphon bassoons to the tune of "How Tasty the Gunpowder Father?". A group of unfocused glaze eyed bison who have very little room for anything but musical atrocity are going to be gathered (when we get



that stack of money back from the northern print house we've been owed) in a patterned grass filled ranch that will keep them shifting and howling in a rhythm after a year or two of gentle coaxing. It's something we've gotten used to, these hardships, but in conclusion there is no exasperation with noise, there is a kind of hopeless consignment to clashing "hidden" reason. We have enough bait and brain to pull some grey tainted know how from some of these disasters. You can hear the best of them on Caroliner releases you know.

### ***Aesthetic, or anti-aesthetic?***

No one will admit to taking aesthesiacs or tooth fixems from the dentist or corner tooth plier clerk of the works. One drummer of ours, Temperance of the Flies, had a knack for pulling out black teeth with his fingers when he'd bite down during "Bullets Instead of Teeth". He had the misfortune to die on us, so we sort of took a spooking to the playing of that song live. In a controlled room, say the practice room, where we take off socks and trade banjos mid song we can get at the most 2 teeth out a month. It can go something like "Whose got the loose one?" then we take turns tapping and pulling with bare fingertips, or the handy squeeze forks, until there is a rattle pop and prize. There's a few dozen of these mouth charms sitting inside the snare drum for that extra ratta rattle snap! You might hear on one of the long plays.

### ***Is there a particular ideology that drives the band?***

We all have the idea to do the best we can. If we don't know what's going on with the song that's prattling in the soup then there's usually a grin or string breaking to cover up the rest of the calamity. The focus is a 1800s get together under unruly ergot circumstances with an outline of distinction under a title to a piece. You can tell by our legacy of records that have come out that there is something going on, maybe half of them are ideas, the rest are balled up hunks of clay on top of a bovine leg and hipbone. We

absolutely do the right thing with the wandering thoughts that stick, like a smooth branch, under the forehead.

### ***Describe an average day for a member of Caroliner.***

Wake up from some violent dream from the imagery of a wonderful Caroliner song. Cook something semi-edible that goes down with a tablespoon full of water. Reading class with a book that lasts about a full minute or two. Stare at the wallpaper for a bit, trying to remember what the heck you were putting in your mind with all those

words. Pick an animal in the house to scratch that seems like it needs some attention. If it doesn't respond with a snap or tongue wag it goes into the freezer for supper. By now we are up to mid-day. It's time to write a few tunes to make the evening pleasant. When frustration sets in for lack of inspiration it's time to do your garden jobs and pull books from the library shelf. Back at home see if there is a something special you know by a familiar name in the icebox. If not there is something in the back yard you can probably sink a tooth into. Calligraphy practice options for attention at this afternoon area. We encourage each other to follow the curve of the Fortes Nation Bank of LeRoy Texas. The two cash tellers who could write had some great movements of the pen we may master and incorporate on the "Proxi-



mate Possessions in Crosswitch" or "Disease at Arms Length" long play recording lyric sheet. It's late evening seeing out the window, so you try to remember the ditty you put together earlier. If that works out then you'll be up all dark of night setting Caroliner lyrics to it. If the song is like a stubbed foot in nailtown then you might as well pack it in for the evening and roll yourself up in the loose fur coated carpet for some more nightmares to get the night over with. You repeat this cycle until you stare away from the sun, and "move out" of the 1800s. People always come back like some rotten pants smell.

**Closing Reception: Saturday, January 13th, 6-8pm**

**Caroliner performance starting at 8pm**

**with Luz Alibi and Georgio Marauder,**

**Theremin Barney, and Ploc Munster**

**GEORGIO MARAUDER** and **LUZ ALIBI** are Jason Stamberger (Crack W.A.R., The Weegs, Neung Phak, Earwicker, Schematic, Le Flange du Mal) and Liz Allbee (who has played/recorded with Anthony Braxton, Cecil Taylor, Porest, Hans Grusel, Le Flange du Mal) Featuring their own blend of homemade and re-partitioned apocalypso instrumentation, Marauder and Alibi investigate the ethnomystical frontiers of crypto-geography, cargo cults, and audiogenetic recording. They have played ceiling fans, roofing metal, vacuum hoses, metal detectors, oscillators, trumpets, shells and other objects both sacred and profane. Together the two have performed live scores to film, been featured on Public Television's "Spark" series (a showcase of the experimental arts), contributed to various compilations and performed countless shows. They are currently composing for the play "Winterland" with the Yugen Noh Theater of San Francisco, to be premiered in July 2007.

**THEREMIN BARNEY** is a wild glass gobbling carnivore to old tube amps and new electronic sound filters. After hitting Czechoslovakia's reserve of Tesla (communist state owned) Tube supply, picking it dry of all the 80 cent tubes they had for sale he came back home and built an amplifier with 25 tubes that knocks out AM radio waves in a sphere of 600 feet. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Hundreds of knobs and filters litter his podium with bonus boxes of theremins all processed thru various effects. He fixed Jean Jaques Perry's exotic "ondesmartenot" instrument in 1999 and then played with him live that same day. Monte Cazzazza of Throbbing Gristle engineering fame came to T.B. to get his take on the instruments of T.G. he had. Barney not only rebuilt them, he improved on them by adding deluxe features like the "cranbozon cuber" and the "whale grows mandibles" features. His new light emitting diode clothing has given Mark of Devo a "splitting headache". Back here on earth he is a whiz trouble shooter for busted old electronics and runs a computer block and tackle company. Live shows fluctuate between a passing rhythms of a cotton ghost train into realms of soaring theremin strangeness. Not to be missed.

**SÃO PAULO** is known for giant blocks of spread out super apartment complexes that were supposed to be the wave of the future. Parts of the city practices Umbanda. This religion is based on a pantheon of strange human creatures, saints, Jesus, divine beings and tortured slaves. Possession of one of these ghosts makes for great entertainment when you couple it with modern digital equipment, chewed tin synthesizer pocket amps, and oscillating evil eyes. Ploc Munster has a million and one sounds he works with as well as the bizarre "ponto" machine divining that which (or witch) comes with the Umbanda consequence. The live show is a cross between a battle of amplified insect vs. tv antennae interference, and collapsing bodies of truffle fluffed candy gods with horns and whistles made of human skeletons. Almost completely indescribable joys abound with this cornucopia of sound.

*How do you think this differs from the average day of, say, the parents of a member of Caroliner? A fan?*

Parent and fan are completely different ends of the Darwin chart. Parents are like a president, all splash and cruelty. The fan is like a librarian, or just plain IS a librarian, with the big licked on pencil and handpad. Some of these audience folks will end up writing on the floor and taking it home with them if the paper runs out. They often have big foreheads and muss materials sticking on the top of the fingernails. There is a betting man who has a dictionary mind in the back of the room. Some of the front row rumagaggers will take the lyrics to heart and try to live them out, like going to Turkey looking for pickled swinging crow-killing forearms. You have one or two fair-faced types who have some calligraphy tattooed on the chest and neck. All flashy skin hints to remind them of chores, and lyrics.

*Who is the Caroliner audience?*

World wide it might be a bunch of rowdy Italians with drunken agendas, Dutch covered in black wax, or Asian chain smoking here and there sound collectors. Out in the states, which is where the majority of shows have been, it's mostly the attentive historian with a clip book and pencil taking notes at the flow of 1800s eye and mind ephemera clanging in the ears. You might find an aged varmint or two who thinks they've seen it all, and then they see us, and then they see it all. We might have answered this question earlier, but that was a half hour ago...so who knows.

*What can we expect from the band at the exhibition's closing performance?*

The next Caroliner show will be a couple of sets, one concentrating on a few thirty-minute singles. The other will be all the new recordings that are coming out over the next few years with some really good oldies. My picks are "Whose Gotten My Teething Cotton", and "Can't Smell Water No More". We haven't practiced those for about four years, so... you know this interview should end right about now. My stomach feels like a bag of rocks moved in. That dullard's gloss painted in the eyes, corner mouth gob of spit coming out sideways is making me hungry for some eat-candy.

