Response

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IS 1001 - First Year Seminar Human Diversity: American Roots Music

- The assignment
- Links to related web pages
- Track names
- Section 18 (9 am)
- Section 27 (Noon)

The assignment

I'd like you to listen to Fred Frith's album Accidental which is available as a collection of MP3s on the library's electronic reserve system (see E-reserve system for information on how to access it), and do a small writing assignment (see below). We've never tried putting music on electronic reserve before, so please give this a try and let me know ASAP if there are problems. If it isn't working very well I can put the actual CD on “regular” reserve and people can fight for it there.

Frith is an English musician who was commissioned to compose a suite for a modern dance company based on Israel. The resulting work wasn't really dance music (as will become obvious enough when you listen) but instead a reflection of his experiences in the Middle East getting background and preparing the music. Note, for example, the song titles, which are by themselves a comment on the complex swirl of perspectives in the region.

This is not easy listening, and may well drive your roommate up a tree. It in fact raises very real questions of

- What is music?
- Is this music?
- What is a song?
- Are these songs?

I personally think this is powerful, fascinating, and thought provoking stuff that repays the effort and attention it demands, but it's definitely not everybody's cup of tea and you're quite welcome to not like it.

It's also important to be clear that this is in no way roots music, and that it's music made by an outsider and doesn't (directly) represent either a Palestinian or an Israeli perspective. This music was written in late 1995 and early 1996, but only released this summer (2002).
For Tuesday (3 Sep) I'd like each of you to listen to the entire album. Additionally I'd like each of you to listen more carefully to two specific tracks (see the tables below) and write a notecard responding to those tracks.

**Links to related web pages**

Some links that might be useful:

- A BBC Music review of *Accidental*
- A BBC Music interview with Frith, which includes one question (right near the end) about *Accidental*
- Fred Frith's web site

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**Track names**

The songs are listed in the e-reserve system in alphabetical order, which (not surprisingly) is not the order they appear on the album. The "correct" track order is:

1. the tangled bank
2. hit and run
3. gatto nero
4. old geometry
5. their blood is black and yellow
6. in a heartbeat
7. fooled again
8. accidental
9. absinthe memories (for Phil Minton)
10. incoming
11. almighty home at last