

1-1-1989

# Gone to Touch

Michael Brewster

*Claremont Graduate University*

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## Recommended Citation

Brewster, M. (1989). Gone to touch. P. 163-182 in Words and spaces: An anthology of twentieth century musical experiments in language and sonic environments (S. Smith and T. DeLio, eds.). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

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## **Gone To Touch**

**Michael Brewster**

Looking back: the evidence had been there all along, all over the place. The telltales had gone undetected, overlooked. I hadn't recognized them as parts of the picture. The plot had been so unexpected. I hadn't been ready for it. Most of those minor incidents had been clues. Once I got wise, I could spot it over and over again, all over the place, the same "M.O." applied to every stage of my game. By then it was too late. Its effects were in full control. Even my own mode of operation had felt its muscle. Pulled off by a single undercover operator, it had been an inside job. My whole outfit had been framed systematically, top to bottom, right under my nose. Laying low until the end, the culprit had not shown its hand until the last minute. Coming out on top, unexpectedly, that secret agent had been a classic Sleeper.

My operation had been infiltrated early on. Just when it began is hard to say. That peculiar hijacker had been a stowaway, possibly on board right from the start. This expose begins in early November of '84, on a less than ordinary day. Instead of the crisp shadows and brilliant blue skies that we've come to expect of our So.Cal. winters (usually our best season) that day the light was white and flat. Under a lid of unbroken clouds, nothing stood out. It looked cold, but it wasn't. It was a day, like so many others, when things were not as they seemed.

Late that Wednesday afternoon, I wrapped up my duties in the outback to the East of Los Angeles, and rolled down the hill to the freeway in my derelict Honda. Two hundred thousand miles and nine years in beach parking lots had left its little body bent and rusted. It looked like a wreck, but it wasn't. I had lost all interest in its body years before, but I still took good care of its insides, which I had upgraded at every overhaul. It looked like it couldn't get out of the garage, but it was "hot" under the hood. Its battered body camouflaged an oversize engine, a superior transmission, and a few other improvements that made it extra agile and quick. That little wagon was a true Sleeper. Its appearance denied its performance. It looked like hell, but it went like hell. People just wouldn't believe what they saw it do. Sleepers are surprising.

Turning at the signal, windows closed up against the noise, I rolled into the on-ramp. Popping the clutch, we roared up the slot at one-third throttle, leaving the end "at speed," with power to spare, alongside a rolling wall of trucks. A Sleeper car

is handy on the freeways. It helps you fake out those big truckers, who like to cut us little guys off on approach, closing us out of the openings. With a car like that you can catch them off guard and slip right through. Bobbing and weaving I sparred my way through their ranks. Then, drifting easily across the next three lanes of cars, I settled down in the fast lane of the "San Berdoo" freeway. We were inbound, rolling West on Interstate-10, headed across town to the far edge of Los Angeles, fifty-four miles away. Running home, with only one stop to make before holing-up in my headquarters at the beach.

I was going to see a man about a job. I put in my ear plugs. This was going to be a Real Job. I needed to keep my ears clean. Not a spin-off Straight Job like the teaching position I had just left, nor an Odd Job as an inventor-handyman to make up for low money, but a Real Job, doing what I really do, making Sculpture "out of" sound effects. The painter, Dan Douke, whose own straight job included directing the Art Gallery at the California State University at Los Angeles, had invited me to listen to his two rooms to see what I might make of them. That was why I had to pamper my ears: to have them ready to "take a good listen."

The ear plugs would protect my hearing from the road noise, helping to keep my ears open and sharp. All that heavy noise would blunt their abilities, closing the threshold up, defending them from the roar of the engine and the pounding road. I needed to keep them as open and sensitive as possible to check out my new subjects. I didn't know what to expect. I was going to listen to those rooms to see what acoustic material I might discover within their layout. I'd be hunting for their echoes, and any other sonic incidents they might conceal. With a little luck, it would become another case for an Acoustic Sculpture.

I was still fond of the old car, loud and beat-up though it was. We'd put in a lot of time together. We'd gone the distance together. Yet it could still perform surprising maneuvers, particularly because nobody suspected that it could. It's body was a complete disguise. Like I said, its appearance denied its performance. It was the perfect Sleeper: the best of its class, but you couldn't tell by looking. It looked weak, but it sounded strong. There is more to a Sleeper than meets the eye.

I'd been fascinated by the idea of Sleepers, off and on, before, and became so again after I discovered that one had wormed its way through my project. Sleeper is the name for something excellent that has been unrecognized, unexpected, or unnoticed, which eventually comes to light, finally getting or giving its due. There are all kinds of them around us: the unnoticed play, the unknown champion, the

unseen spy, the "late-bloomer"; all are unexpected winners, including my own secret agent.

Sleepers don't look like winners. Their talents are disguised. They tend to look ordinary. They don't attract attention. When they dress-up it's in plain-wrap. You can't know what to expect. Play it by ear. You have to watch out for them. Laying low until the last minute, they'll sneak up from behind to win, without fanfare. You have to pay special attention. Keep your mind open. It takes some imagination. Sleepers are hard to spot.

You can't know a Sleeper ahead of time. Only a thing whose excellence has been unknown can qualify. It has to earn its peculiar title. Sleepers are named after the fact, looking back. They fit many descriptions, and exist in many different places. But they always occur in the same way. Even if they don't look alike, they all act the same. They all follow the same course on their way to the top. Slow starters, they "come-on" gradually, taking a long low route, "peaking-out" real high, all of a sudden. Shy, but mercurial, that's how they do things. It is their "M.O.", the pattern of their behavior.

Such a pattern is called an *envelope*. It is a graph of how something begins, continues, and ends. It charts a trajectory through time, picturing the rate and level of its rise and fall in terms of attack, decay, sustain, and release. An envelope traces a profile in time that describes the *shape* of an occurrence.

You can spot a Sleeper by the shape of its envelope. It's a matter of timing. The shape of its "attack" is the kicker. Sleepers don't attack. They're too slow. They approach. The shape of their rise time is long and low, culminating suddenly in a mercurial peak. When it comes to uncovering a Sleeper it's what's up front that counts. The aftermath has no bearing on the matter. Some Sleepers hang around, others split.

As an idea, the shape of their behavior can take it from a lot of angles. It's very flexible. It can serve as the format for a strategy or an ethic; it can be a refuge or a pitfall. As an adolescent, I had looked to it as a model, finding virtue in its modest persistence, and style in its restrained vigor. Earlier, at puberty, I had taken solace in its assurance of an unpredicted but eventual climax. Much later, after I'd discovered its imprint all over my sculpture, I felt that its profile looked more like a picture of the "snake in the grass."

My acoustic sculpture, *Touch and Go*, had been hijacked in the making. Its course and consequences had been rerouted. Not by some agent acting like a Sleeper,

but by the Sleeper's envelope itself. The Sleeper had thrown its shape all over my piece. Unbelievably, I'd been done in by a *pattern*. I'd become surrounded by the Sleeper's M.O.

An envelope can be the cause of an event as well as the effect of one. Either way, it is the shape of the surrounding circumstance, which the envelope can record or specify. When an envelope directs the shape of an occurrence it functions as a modulator, controlling the variations of the event. A modulator *envelope* causes things within its reach to vary in its own image, muscling them into its own pattern.

Envelopes and modulators, that's what I'd been thinking about that first day, cruising along on the freeway, where we Angelenos do much of our thinking. I had been studying about how to use them to fabricate and control sounds long before I knew anything about this Sleeper's scam. That day, I had been reflecting on how the repeated superposition of the same envelope, over and over again, would configure situations that could actually "grow their own" change and variation. You can get into some mighty "far" places hurtling along up there in those freeway gasses. I was "brought down" in the nick of time, forty minutes to the West, by bright brake lights dead ahead.

There's always a "slow-down" in front of Cal State L. A. It's built into the freeway. The road swerves left and downhill at the same time, then bends back to the right and uphill. Just before the traffic thickened, I veered off to the right and made my escape, shifting down through the exit ramp to ground level. Pausing to repace my attention, I rolled down the windows and took in some air, readjusting to the surface rate. Turning at the signal, in low gear, I began the coiling approach around the college buildings searching for the visitor's place to park. It was well hidden, but I found it. Getting out of the car, I pulled out the ear plugs and submerged into the flood of local noise. Now on foot, I started out through unfamiliar territory, reckoning my uncertain approach to the art building. I didn't know what I was looking for. I didn't have a description. When I got there I understood why. The building was government issue: faceless and indescribable.

Once inside, I spied the gallery entrance before I spotted the stairwell, and decided to eavesdrop on my subjects before going upstairs to meet Dan in his office. I wanted to grab a sample of the room's voices. Even a quick "take" would give me some idea of the range and power of its resonances. Like a throat, a room will overlay its own resonances on the sounds inside it, modulating them with its own "voice."

Strolling into the gallery through its glass doors, I crossed a tight vestibule and slipped behind a baffle that screened a narrow floor-to-ceiling slot, the corner "doorway" of the front gallery; a squarish room, 18x20, painted battleship grey and hung with very large landscape paintings. Diagonally across from the entrance, where the rear wall stopped short of the corner, was another floor-to-ceiling gap that opened to the back gallery; a rectangular room, 18x24, also painted grey and hung with large thickly painted landscapes. It was a little deeper than the front space but in plan view it looked like its mirror image. Like the front room it was open at two diagonal corners, where the walls had been stopped short. The door slot in its rear right corner opened onto a most improbable and peculiar gallery space. Only five and a half feet wide, with glass doors making up its outer wall, this space flanked both the principal rooms. It ran fifty-four feet straight to the front, bending to the right to meet the vestibule. It seemed a strange and unreasonable item.

The floor throughout the gallery was off-white linoleum tile over concrete, and its eleven foot ceiling had been softened with acoustic tiles glued directly to the cement overhead. Neither of the rooms held any space captive, ducted as they were to each adjoining space through the access slots. The two main rooms were buffered and linked on their outer and front sides by that glass-sided corridor and the vestibule. Their air was cluttered by a low "whoosh" noise broadcasting from the air vents along the top of the left wall. I doubted that I'd be able to hear much of the room's voicings above it. It would certainly mask off all the quieter responses.

Furtively, I clapped my hands a couple of times, and listened for the echoes. I also let loose a couple of whistles, which brought forth the gallery sitter, glaring. Turning my back, I stonewalled her. I needed to hear these rooms' voices. This was my research. These resonances would be my allies, my informants. In fact, some would be the actual physical building blocks of my sculpture. Each room resounded differently, but both responded with padded, composite replies. The echoes were there, but they were lower in frequency than I'd expected, shorter and weaker than I'd hoped for. They returned after curious little pauses, as if reluctantly let go. There was something peculiar about their behavior. I couldn't see it, but I could hear it. There was something mysterious in their voices.

The sitter was watching the back of my head. I could feel her gaze. Feeling like I'd stumbled into the wrong neighborhood, I ducked-out through the back opening, shaking my head in disbelief at that long, skinny, peculiar room. Its glass wall made it seem wider than it was. It was a very fast place. Like an exit tunnel,

that hallway gallery propelled me forward, turning me loose in the vestibule. It left me a little off balance. I tumbled out the entrance and headed up the stairs.

That corridor was the tattle-tale. It gave it all away. It was a too familiar story. This room, "retrofit" like so many other college art galleries, had started out as a class-room. Conscripted out of studio duty long ago, stripped and white-washed, it had been outfitted with regulation track lights and sitter's desk, and pressed into display-duty, at the front. It was well preserved, but it looked a little worn. I sensed that it had served under several regimes. Its surfaces had seen a lot of action since its early days in art production. The often hasty reforms of each occupation had been pancaked over with loads of drywall compound and latex paint. Apart from a few telltale tucks here and there, those piecemeal face-lifts could no longer be seen on its surfaces. But I didn't have to be a detective to hear the irregular scars on its voices. Nothing specific, but enough to know that this room was a veteran. There had been more than one cover-up.

Upstairs Dan and I talked for about an hour, discussing the logistics of this job, joking about the funny aspects of some previous pieces. Dan was very easy to work with, truly a gentleman. We talked schedule, fee, publicity, costs, payments, all those awkward issues, with ease and understanding. I thought it was pretty refreshing. Dan thought it was normal.

He was concerned that the rooms would be adequate, if not interesting to me. I said I'd "cased" them on the way in, troubling his gallery sitter with my "noise tests." I was concerned about their slow responses. They weren't "giving good echo." I suspected that those big paintings blanketing the walls were soaking up the reverberations that I would need to make this work. I needed to make noise in there again, louder noise, before the day was out. But I'd really have to hear it when it was naked, to be sure.

Acknowledging my penchant for burying sounders in the walls, Dan repeated his assurance that I could make all the wall chops and cuts that I might dream up. I replied that I now preferred to *inflect* the change on the rooms, using the lightest touch possible. I wanted to keep all my modifications superficial, if not actually airborne. I'd like to avoid making more than one hole in the walls. I would, however, have to rearrange the gallery's electrical system, which I would put back together afterwards, guaranteed.

Later, under Dan's official shield, I made some louder test noises, walking throughout the gallery shouting and clapping, getting more echo with the stronger

signals. Dan introduced Paula van der Lans, the sitter. She wanted to know just what was going on. I explained that we were thinking about putting in a sound installation, continuing the series I called the Acoustic Sculptures, begun in '71; all of which have been based on the spatial effects of *standing waves*. This wave-form phenomena, so named by physics, can expose the dimensional properties of sound, showing the size of its wavelengths, by making sound waves seem to stand still in space, holding their place in fields of distinct and varied concentrations.

I had been clapping my hands, whistling, and hooting, because I was trying to learn a little about how these rooms performed acoustically. You could say I was auditioning the rooms. I wanted to see how they acted around certain sounds. I needed to hear what kind of echo these places could deliver because a standing wave depends on the effects of a sustained echo or reverberation to show us its stuff.

The usually fugitive nature of sound can be arrested, I explained, by bouncing the wave fronts back upon themselves. It's a bit like trapping the sound within its own reflected image, its echo. It's a matter of alignment. The opposite-moving wave fronts must intersect each other in phase, every step of the way. Always in flux, the potential of any point in a sound wave is never static, consistently becoming either more positive or more negative. A wave form "stands" when the correspondence of opposing fronts is congruent, perfectly matched, with every positive going portion neutralized by its opposite "equal," the negative-going portion, causing the sound to seem to hang in place, stilled as if strobed.

I set up these fields of standing sound so that we might wander around through their audial geography, discovering within the effects of acoustic sound another class of sculptural experience: spatial sensations of dynamic, non-solid volumes. The sculpture I offer is a set of percepts we get from the spatial effects of sound when it is modulated by a surrounding enclosure. I explained to the sitter that you could say that these sound fields placed each viewer in the position of "the figure in the landscape." A landscape that can only be "seen" from the inside, by walking your ears through each part of its terrain. That explanation seemed to do away with her skepticism. Throughout the exhibition, she acted as a most helpful guide to this new territory. Her work with the public was invaluable. I owe both her and Dan Douke much gratitude for the whole thing.

These rooms are a tough pair, I said to Dan. Their mysteries might be hard to crack. This was no open and shut case. I'd have to come back to listen-in when the rooms were vacant and bare, between shows. He hoped it wouldn't be too tough,



suggesting that perhaps I could use something already on my shelf, to keep it simple, especially in light of the budget. I'd give it a shot, I said, even though the rooms sounded pretty weary and slow. I could probably figure something out to boost those tired acoustics. I welcomed the work. I'd been feeling neglected, and needed the exercise. Unwittingly, I said I had a hunch these spaces might be Sleepers. We left the place laughing, going out through its glassed exit hall, unaware of the upcoming irony.

After a quick inquiry at the printers nearby, I steered the little Honda through the gauntlet heart of Los Angeles and rolled on home to my hideout in Venice, loony-land by the sea. It would be good to be back in the saddle again, no matter how modest the deal. I was pleased, but I wasn't excited. I didn't want to just "plug-in" an old piece, but I couldn't afford to lose my shirt again, either. At the end of that first day things didn't look very promising.

Looking back, however, that project and its hijacker really opened things up for me, even though I did lose my shirt, again. That winter must have been the Season for Sleepers. From that day on, they popped up, in one form or another, all over the place. Many were old ideas, long in the works, which resurfaced and bunched together, now making a different kind of sense than before. Following their lead, I launched into rich territory.

That first day marks the beginning of the Sleeper's infiltration, the coup that turned out to be my liberation. I'd like to declare it a holiday. But a Day of the Sleeper would never be a very important holiday. It's profile would be so low that even the banks would stay open. You wouldn't be expected to visit, eat or spend too much. So low key, it would probably look like any ordinary day. People would forget about it. It might get good after dark, but who knows? Sleepers are unpredictable. They do get pretty hot once they're on their final approach, but with Sleepers it's hard to say ahead of time.

During the following weeks I pondered the case, hitting it from all angles. It was tough. All I had to go on was a sketch of its footprint and the few things I'd overheard. Going back to the drawing board, time and again, I drew scaled diagrams and perspective views of the rooms from off-beat points of view, trying to decipher the directives of its floorplan. Eventually I recognized the obvious, seeing a simple solution that would incorporate all the parts of that floorplan, without contradicting the architecture's directions to the viewers.

My plan reversed the usual traffic pattern by starting at the front end of the "exit gallery". The installation would be set up to provide two sequential, timed experiences, each winding-up in one of the main rooms. The two situations would be identical in format: start, approach, enter, inhabit, depart. The hallway space would be the approach to the back chamber, which would, in turn, double as the approach to the front chamber. Each approach would begin with a touch-sensitive switch that would trigger a sound field on down the line, culminating in the room at its end. With signal lighting, switching and signage to direct us, the sounding sequences would draw us through the rooms. All these *accessories* would be interconnected through an exposed electrical conduit. Their functions would be coordinated by a bunch of clock circuits on a central timer board, hidden, with the sound and envelope generators, inside the hollow end of the extra thick middle wall.

Carrying my tone generators out to the galleries on countless nights, I set up standing waves of different sizes and character. I teased and tested their acoustics, trying to get a grip on the peculiar and varied reactions they voiced. I probed the reverberations by walking and re-walking through the volumes. I listened for the strongest resonances, retracing my steps. Like I said, their resonances were my material, but it took a lot of legwork to decipher them. In those standing fields the only way to know what is "over there" is to go over there and walk through "over there." You can't hear "over there" from over here. I found that even though the two rooms looked alike they didn't sound the same. Not mirror-images, they were actually the "flip-side" of each other. Acoustically they behaved in very opposite ways. What one could reflect the other could only absorb. What one could repeat, the other couldn't even recall.

Eventually my questioning did turn up the answers. The clues had been in its voices all along. The legwork paid off. Now I knew what each room could do. I had learned their habits. I could see through the layout. As echo chambers, the galleries had similar features but different M.O.s. Now I had their numbers, but I was missing the twist that would tie them together at the scene. Nothing made sense until I went at it backwards, walking the floor plan in reverse, against the flow of traffic. Coming in from behind, their circumstances seemed to fit together. From that angle I could see the whole scheme. *Touch and Go* put the two chambers to work in tandem. Each housed a different sound field. Our passage through its interiors consisted of a 3 minute arrival and a 2 minute departure. A full circuit took under 6 minutes.

The installation reversed the gallery's usual patterns, altering our course right from the start. Just inside the glass doors our path was deflected by a little paper sign pointing: THIS WAY-->, turning us to our right, into the front leg of the glassed corridor, directing us to enter through the gallery's usual exit. We were facing a standard electrical switch box mounted, belly-high, on the wall across from us, highlighted by a red spotlight. On its faceplate we could read the word "TOUCH" in flickering red light. This was the beginning of the piece. Touching the switch plate set off the first sequence. The red invitation on the faceplate was replaced by the green command: "GO 3 minutes," and, as the red spot faded down, the first sound field came up in the back room. The wavering sound came pulsing towards us, as if beckoning, from the far end of the corridor, which now glowed with red light.

Turning at the signal, we started our approach into the hallway. Just a few feet ahead, its width was two-thirds blocked, on alternate sides, by three pipe railings, hip-high, spaced about three feet apart. These were the Training Bars. The path they contoured was a suggestion of how to proceed: walk slowly from side to side. They formed the actual threshold of the piece. Placed where the sound field first became evident, their crooked passage introduced us to the simplest of the upcoming sensations. By bending our path in a U-turn across the hallway, the Training Bars slowed us down enough to readjust our perception and guided our heads through a place where the pulsed sound seemed to concentrate and float momentarily, like a bubble of thicker air. It was just a hint of things to come.

Taking the cue from the Training Bars, our path continued to trace a slow "S" down the corridor, carrying us side to side through more pronounced zones of pulsing sound that we found hovering along the sides of the passage. The field seemed to thicken substantially near the end of the hall. Once there, most of us, abandoning our training, picked up speed and veered left, entering the back room from behind, through the rear door-slot.

The place looked empty, but it sounded full. It was loaded with a much louder, more distinct field of sound, thickly alternated with pulsing volumes. We faced a small black loudspeaker directly across from our entrance, mounted in the back corner, belly-high. The sound source was lit by a red spot, while the opposite side of the room was lit by a pink flood which cast a curved perimeter on the walls and floor. The lighting was low, on the dark side, but navigable. Mostly red wavelengths, it made the air look a bit granulated.

The sound was coming out of the tiny speaker at about 100 decibels, c scale. Pulsing at 4 beats per second, it was the mix of two tones, 205 herz and 209 herz, between G and A in the third octave, cycling on for 10 seconds, and off for 1.5 seconds, continuing for three minutes after we touched the switch. The sound field was the product of two wavelengths, of almost equal size, a 5 foot 4.5 inch wave modulated by a 5 foot 3 inch wave.

The 10 second pulse was enveloped into a quick 0.5 second attack, a high smooth 6.5 second sustain, and a slow, steadily falling 3 second release. The sound's envelope was not the shape of a Sleeper. Its front end came up fast and steady right from the start. Its shape was more like the pattern of a Keeper, holding its profile long enough to allow us to scrutinize it. In here you listened to the fullness of the pulse. The back room had an intimate touch. In here you could feel the sound. Its three minute field brought the space in, close around us, providing sensations of the "near-field," of "here," our immediate surround. With each stop we would arrive at another aspect of the pulsed field. It helped to stop and start, bobbing and weaving our ears slowly through its varied terrain. In here you moved quickly during the interval, but slowly during the pulse.

The back room had a varied and regional response, reinforcing different aspects of the signal at different parts of its geography. Over the years its walls had become padded sandwiches of various materials, each with its own peculiar composite resonance. Now some portions of the walls worked against the others, cancelling their resonances. There were occasional voids, dead hollows, in the sound field. One, curiously, was only about a foot in front of the speakers. It was adjacent to one of the loudest portions of the field. The reverberations mixed, unmixed, and remixed, unpredictably, throughout the cavity. In some places the pulse beat appeared to change its rate, while other spots were populated by ringing harmonics.

The absence of the field during the 1.5 second intervals underscored the emptiness of the room. The pulses trailed little, if any, echo. Although it appeared quite full and resonant in the presence of the signal, the back room couldn't keep an echo up on its own. Built piecemeal, it had been dampened, if not rubberized, by its "checkered" past. The back room responded reluctantly, acknowledging only the longer wavelengths. Its range was confined to those frequencies with which most of its surfaces vibrated sympathetically. This room now worked by soaking; absorbing the invading sounds instead of bouncing them away. The only reason it could support

a field of standing waves was that the speaker was pumping its volume with more energy than it could absorb.

Cut-off at three minutes, the field disappeared as the lights dimmed down. A red spot faded up on a second touch-switch, mounted belly-high on the outer wall of the back room, a few feet forward of the rear door slot. Like the first, its faceplate said "TOUCH" in flickering red light. This switch triggered the sculpture's second and final sequence. The sign changed to the green command: "GO 2 minutes," causing the red spot to fade down, while bringing up the sound field in the front room. We could hear its short strident bursts, calling repeatedly from around the corner. Turning at the signal, we made a fast approach to the door slot, entering the front room, again from behind.

The place looked empty, and it sounded empty. It staged a field of departing echoes. This room was laid out like the first. Directly across from our entrance, another small black loudspeaker was mounted in the front corner, belly-high. It was lit by a red spot, while the opposite side of the room, the reflector, was lit by a pink flood.

The sound was coming out of the tiny speaker at about 110 decibels, c scale. It was the mix of two tones, 350 herz and 250 herz, F fourth and B third, cycling on for 0.6 seconds, and off for 2 seconds, continuing for two minutes from the moment we touched the second switch. The sound field was the product of two wavelengths, a 3 foot 1.5 inch wave modulated by a 4 foot 5.0 inch wave.

The envelope of its 0.6 second bursts was all attack, cutting-off abruptly at the peak in a sudden release. Although it was all "front-end," its contour was also not the shape of a Sleeper. Coming up so fast and strong from the start, this envelope looked like a Comer, but it turned out to be a "Flash in the Pan." As soon as it hit its peak it collapsed and was gone, making room for the field, which took place during the interval. It was made by the after-effects of each burst. The signal lasted just long enough to charge the front room to its full resonant capacity. Its sudden release cut loose a field of fading echoes that was renewed once every two seconds, just before it faded away, by another burst of sound.

The front room seemed tighter and more vibrant. Its walls must've been tauter, enabling it to support a long-lasting echo. In there you listened to the hollow, in the interval. The fade somehow introduced the percept of distance. The longer-lingering echoes contoured more remote borders. The front room brought you glimpses of a "far-field" experience, of "there," the remote surround. In the echo

field, the spatial properties were evenly dispersed. It helped to stop and start, slowly sweeping our ears around its contours. In the front room we moved during the pulse, pausing in the interval to listen to the departure of the local echo.

The two minutes went by pretty fast. The sound ran out just as we were catching on, trailing one lasting echo as the lights dimmed down. We walked out through the entrance into the now greenish light of the vestibule. To our left, signalled by the red spot, the first touch-switch was reset, ready for another tour. We could give up, and get out. Or, we could go around again. I've always favored the repeat. Once is never enough; it's just a glance. Do a double take. Read this story over again, from the beginning.

The Fine Arts Gallery was hidden inside Cal State L.A., it did not attract attention. Though only fifteen minutes east of downtown Los Angeles, it was out of the way. Open to the public during the limited hours of noon to five, Monday through Friday, it did not make itself available. Yet, ironically, *Touch and Go* itself was not a Sleeper. It was noticed right away, and was favorably reviewed. It was not neglected, but it wasn't celebrated. It didn't get any more attention at the end than it did in the beginning. There was no glorious peak. It's not easy to be a Sleeper.

The "Real Job," as it turned out, was the squeeze the Sleeper's pattern put on me. Much to my surprise, in just a few weeks, what was to have been a "simple shot" had mushroomed unexpectedly into a most elaborate work, taxing both my resources and my wits. For a while, I found myself broke and barefoot, in unfamiliar territory. I'd been locked into the Sleeper's pattern. It was both a great strategy and a great pitfall. *Touch and Go* had been a real turning point, but its solutions had come alarmingly late in the game.

*Touch and Go* was in place from January 7 to February 18, 1985. The case that took eight weeks to invent and build, took five minutes to state. It was dismantled a month later, gone in three hours. The bulk of the evidence was circumstantial and has disappeared. We can't touch it. Most of its parts were cannibalized, "donored" into subsequent jobs. Apart from a "wild wad" of working drawings, the only evidence left is a pair of disconnected switch boxes, slotted with the words TOUCH, GO, 3 MINS and 2 MINS.

The original testimony was a nice but yellowing review, a few left-over brochures, and a couple of sets of "slides-n-tape." Now there is this true but unlikely story of how a sound sculpture in an accessorized room was hijacked by a pattern, in plain view but off the beaten track. Closed after a month of hearings, *Touch and*

**Go never got much of a trial. The evidence was entirely circumstantial. Similar cases have since been made, some in higher courts nearby. I've got a hunch the jury's still out. We're going to hear more about this.**













