a jet engine, the buzz of a dental hygienist’s buffing tool poked into your ear, a heartbeat at 110 decibels, a calliope running backward, the water mirage of heat rising from highway asphalt in the desert, the Doppler effect of an el train passing the open window of an apartment where the television is on but the station has signed off and the room is filled with gray light and cracking static.

Ostertag also added an uncommonly physical dimension to the performance of computer music by manipulating Don Buchla’s magical Lightning device — some kind of wand that, when moved around in front of a panel, controls the dynamics of the chosen sound. As Ostertag stood and waved the Lightning rod, he “conducted” the velocity and volume of the sounds he’d programmed into his machines.

All the while, Frith — a virtual international citizen who is British by birth and avant-garde by choice and reputation (Henry Cow, Art Bears, Massacre, French Frith Kaiser Thompson, etc.) — was performing the kind of unnatural acts with his guitar that are probably condemned in the Republican Party platform. He stuck sticks in the strings, fwerapped it with a paint brush, pounded it with the heel of his hand, sawed at it with a violin bow, held it flat in his lap and dropped a chain on the strings, twisted the tuning keys, fingered the frets with all his fingers. He also chanted into a voice mike and discharged piercing shrieks of feedback.

The results were anything but ugly. At times they were as beautiful, in their own way, as pealing cathedral bells, Japanese koto music, or the pastoral/celestial meditations of Brian Eno or Kitaro — if either one of those musicians chewed glass. The listening, the interplay, the subtle dance between Frith and Ostertag was brilliant (as were many of their subsequent sparring matches with the saxophonists of R und V ). From their jarring deconstructivist noises they were raising real music — music that could only come into being because those individuals were there at that moment, music so intense that it was barely contained by their virtuosity.

In fact, Ostertag and Frith were making “new music” much the same way Sonic Youth makes rock. As artful as it is (in its calculated sloppy manner), Sonic Youth qualifies as a pop act, I suppose, by virtue of configuration, beat, sexiness, and lyrics, not to mention marketing. And yet nothing on Dirty, not even “Swimsuit Issue” or “Youth Against Fascism,” strikes me as having as much currency as the short, never-to-be-replicated piece Frith and Ostertag performed in which Ostertag manipulated fragments of Rodney King’s “can we all get along” speech — “ums” and all — so that the words hovered, repeated, staggered in all their naked, quivering, and fluttered emotion through Frith’s gentle steele textures. The musicians dissolved before us, and we were presented with a new, vivid angle on reality. I hope the crowd watching Sonic Youth got one, too.

Frith and Ostertag put on the most fascinating half-hour of extemporaneous duets since pianist Greg Goodman and guitarist Derek Bailey jammed last month at Woody Woodman’s Finger Palace. Ostertag was sitting at an electronic keyboard from which he triggered tsunamis of sampled sounds. Few of the noises were readily identifiable but all of them created vivid impressions: the roar of wind through the high Sierra timberline, the idle of