technology that falls somewhere between the newspaper production and distribution systems of the past and the customized online newspaper of the future. Krishnaswami hopes to enlarge the newsletter to four pages, introduce advertising, and expand distribution to include other Indian markets throughout the New York area. The India Journal: +1 (201) 217 2403. — Todd Lappin

Osterreich's Osterizer

The first thing you notice upon meeting Bob Ostertag, besides his shaved head, is his voice — it's a near-whisper. Call it yin and yang: although the San Francisco musician speaks softly, he likes his music to scream.

Working with such divergent collaborators as Fred Frith, jazz artists John Zorn and Anthony Braxton, Faith No More frontman Mike Patton, and members of the Kronos Quartet, Ostertag has scavenged technology and recorded music into the same clausrophobic box since the late 1970s. Incorporating "found sounds" cribbed from varied sources — All The Rage includes angry shouts from a pro-gay riot and Sooner or Later features a weeping Salvadoran child burying his father — Ostertag creates moody, politically tinged "reality pieces" that musically address anger, grief, and joy. Yet his latest effort, Fear No Love (Avant), is a beat-driven dance-club record reflecting his perceived need for "timely queer music."

Ostertag's Say No More ensemble melds flesh-and-blood musicianship with hard-edged technology in yet another provocative way. This project began with three musicians — a vocalist, a contrabassist, and a drummer — whose solo improvisations Ostertag recorded and, using digital sampling equipment, diced into tiny fragments of sound. Reassembling the snippets, he wrote new pieces from them, and the original musicians taught themselves to play the resultant work. "It's a way for me to write for an ensemble without resorting to the hieroglyphs of traditional notation," Ostertag explains. "I can specify precise things I want to happen at different times. Since I'm using the musicians' own playing as my original source of material, I'm assured that whatever I do will be idiomatic to them."

Ostertag compares this process to breaking apart and recombining separate syllables of language. The challenge, he says of his composing technique, is "to disassemble the initial recordings sufficiently so they can be reconstructed into physical music, yet not break them into such small splinters that the voice of the original soloist is lost."

"The whole point — and I had to convince the musicians of this — was to develop ensemble material that we could never have arrived at without going through this process." His voice conveys a quiet urgency. "Even though the musicians know they can't replicate what's on the computer, it's what they're given to start with. It makes them play in entirely new ways. Phil Minton, for example, has extraordinary vocal techniques: this vehicle pushes him hard, displaying his full range from beginning to end."

Ostertag recently returned from a tour with Say No More in time for the release of Fear No Love, a massive collaboration with local queer and queer-friendly scene makers — friends he chose to work with but who "weren't virtuoso composers."

"I've been a political organizer, journalist, and musician," he says, "and I don't want to make speeches or write articles. I want to make music. I feel constrained sometimes in predominantly heterosexual social conventions. To me, everything about my work is queer — in all senses of the word. It's funny: the gay community produces lots of dancers, painters, and writers, but musicians are expected to sing show tunes or cabaret. For soft-spoken Ostertag, the digital sampling keyboard will continue to do the singing—and screaming. Fear No Love: US$15. 41 Sutter Street, Suite 1108, San Francisco, CA 94104. — Colin Berry

Making Multimedia Cheaper

Multimedia may be booming right now, but not everyone is bullish. Hamish Forsythe thinks the technology's on the verge of a painful shakeout. "I want this industry to live," he says. Right now, explains Forsythe, creating multimedia titles is so costly that many never make it to market — the ones that do often cost too much and deliver too little.

Forsythe is president of mFactory Inc., whose new multimedia authoring system, mTropolis, is designed to make developing sophisticated titles easier.

Most authoring tools, notably Macromedia's hugely popular Director, are designed to let authors coordinate the playback of animation and sound. mTropolis, on the other hand, lets authors create miniature worlds full of objects that look, sound, and behave in certain ways. The mTropolis engine gives the user a view of these objects and allows them to manipulate what's happening inside the miniature worlds at any time.

For example, consider the buttons on the inside of the fireplace in Myst: You click on the metal and there's this tinny poit sound as a square indentation appears