

# MOBIUS NEWSLETTER

354 CONGRESS STREET, BOSTON  
(FORT POINT) (617) 542-7416

VOL. 2, NO. 2 OCT/NOV 1984

October and November at Mobius bring a full schedule of performances, concerts and installations, by artists from Boston to Italy. Here in this newsletter are statements by the artists about their work. We've also included an interview with performance artist Ron Wallace about his newest piece, and a commentary by David Miller about criticism.

We're pleased to announce that Meet the Composer, through the New England Foundation for the Arts, is going to be supporting our '5 Evenings/October' concert series, that was programmed by Malcolm Goldstein.

And we're sorry to point out that TheaterWorks had to cancel their performances of 'Female Parts', the Dario Fo plays, due to scheduling conflicts with 'King Lear'.

But there are plenty of other things to come to, and we look forward to seeing you here at Mobius events.

## PRAIRIE HOME COMPUTER

Eric Hughes, with computer  
co-host R-U12

Friday, Oct. 5 EPISODE #9

"ARTS FROM THE LEFT SIDE OF  
THE BRAIN" \* \* \* \* \*

!! THE FALL HIGH-TECH

FASHION SHOW !!

!! MARY TYLER GLAD INTERVIEWS

KING COG !!

++ NEW PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENTS ++

++ THE ETIQUETTE FOLLIES ++

THE LIQUIDLY MOBILE  
AEROBOTIC DANCERS

----- LEFT BRAIN POEMS

----- LEFT BRAIN SONGS

--LEFT BRAIN CULTURE SCULPTURE

(and previews of Right Brain  
Science)

\* WORDS! \* WORDS! \* WORDS! \*

"The mockery of conventions  
that are ultimately grounded in  
cognitive capacity might be ex-  
pected to become virtually an  
art form in itself."

-- Noam Chomsky

(The special performance of  
R-U12 is made possible through  
the loan of a computer system  
with speech thynthethizer from  
the Digital Equipment Corpora-  
tion.)

-- Eric Hughes

## THIEF

A play written and performed  
by Gary Duehr

Saturdays, Oct. 6 and 13

I am taken with the idea of  
a double life. Stories of a  
husband who walks away without  
saying anything and starts a  
new life a block away, people  
who develop amnesia, twins  
separated at birth who  
discover forty years later  
they are following the same  
life.

I wonder about their feelings  
at finding everything laid  
bare.

I arrived in Boston five  
months ago. I knew two people  
who were gone. After two  
weeks the police took me from  
their apartment for trespass-  
ing at two in the morning.  
Before I lived my total life  
in the midwest.

O trauma of mathematics!

A thief enters a strange  
house. He is a thief because  
he is in the house. A thief  
is someone who surrounds  
himself with things that  
don't belong to him.

In *Thief*, at first I am  
unable to speak because no  
words apply.

A doctor looks on angrily.

I am wounded in my shoulder,  
calf, head, side, mouth,  
eyes.

I imagine a thief in a story  
who is a cowboy and an execu-  
tive and a surgeon.

I address my concerns:  
"Thief! someone cries from  
his personal anxiety and  
heads turn, not toward the  
figure disappearing into  
figures, plural, but him.

"Thief! and we cannot point  
attention toward the accom-  
plice, the weight falls back  
heavily on us.

"Thief! and we attempt to  
identify ourselves as victim,  
observer, innocent visitor."

Gary Duehr

## NIGHTSONG and SEA COW

By Melodie Arterberry

October 19 and 20

NIGHTSONG is a performance piece using a Pueblo Indian myth as its primary source. Its premise is that the place of man and woman is in the affective life, not in the passive and vicarious, often cultivated by media and reinforced by environments robbed of natural presence. It is played by seven performers using movement, masks, narrated texts and song. During most of the piece, a man is seated in an armchair reading the newspaper. Alongside the seated man appear a continually changing series of images and associations of the man and text.

This piece was first staged in September 1983. This performance will be its second incarnation, thanks to a grant from the Arts Lottery.

SEA COW is a dream piece. Like myths, dreams seem to me to be composed of powerful ideas and feelings packaged in compact and potent images. I am interested in doing theatre that can reach people at the level and with the efficiency and universality of dreams and myths. Sea Cow is a dream-myth of three sisters in archetypal roles.

Melodie Arterberry

## PRIVATE PROPERTY and SNIPING

Two new sculptures by Tim Brooks  
Sunday, October 14 3-6 pm  
D & H Associates Gallery  
20 East Street, Boston (5th Fl.)

The thing I hate most about going to art type things is that usually you get there and you look at the crap for a couple of minutes, find out where the bar is, go to it, and all they have is stupid fucking white wine. I mean who wants white wine on a hot afternoon? Nobody, except for maybe faggots and stupid little middle aged art grouple twats who don't even know they're dead and stinking up the whole place. Know that what I want is a nice cold beer, and not some stupid imported piece of shit beer either. I want good cheap American beer, in a can, and that's what you'll be served if you bother to come see my stupid fucking sculptures on Sunday, Oct 14.

(Private Property is an indoor, large-scale environmental sculpture. Sniping will be installed on the roof, and will be best viewed from the surrounding streets.)

## 5 EVENINGS/OCTOBER

Programmed by Malcolm Goldstein

October 24 - 28

Malcolm Goldstein has organized this series of concerts at Mobius in an effort to establish a source of new music activities that have been overlooked in the larger Boston community. He writes: "There is a new music happening. It has been going on and will continue. It is a music that pushes farther and deeper into nuances of sound that are in touch with the world we live in, each moment, now. It is a music that is called experimental; it takes risks so as to discover and expand the human consciousness, expressed in new musical forms. It needs to be heard."

October 24: David Moss, percussion and voice.

"I am interested in the tangibility of sound, the activation of objects, the passage of time, the gravity of transition, language, control (in/out of), foreground/background, song, momentum, surprise, architecture, silence, and line. . . . My work progresses in three directions: 1) creating an extended, non-connotative percussion vocabulary; 2) developing my voice as an instrument capable of fusing percussive textures into new sonic alloys; 3) ongoing collaborations with musicians, dancers, and artists."

October 25: Lowell Davidson, string bass trio.

Lowell Davidson will perform new works for contrabass choir, featuring his own playing on aluminum bass, and the premiere of his sound construction, "Video-Quadrasonics". He has performed with Ornette Coleman, John Tchai, Roswell Rudd, and the Paul Bley Quartet.

October 26: Robert Rutman/U.S. Steel Cello Ensemble.

Robert Rutman has invented an unique ensemble of steel sound sculptures. Together with the Steel Cello and the Bow Chime, this concert will feature the first performances on the Real Steel Cello and vocal improvisation by the ensemble.

October 27: Malcolm Goldstein and Tom Plsek, violin and trombone. Malcolm Goldstein: "How is it that we have so thoroughly omitted improvisation from the experience/musicianship/training of students in practically every college and music conservatory . . . or perhaps it would be more accurate to say "excluded?!" And, if it has been excluded, then what does such an act tell us about our culture, attitudes, and value systems?"

Tom Plsek is a composer/trombonist of diverse musical experiences. He has been recognized as "a virtuoso of new effects and techniques; he spins out wonderful webs of polyphonic-like textures." He is chairman of the Low Brass Department at Berklee College of Music.

October 28: Jon Damian, guitar and rubbertellie.

"An interesting challenge is to break down the usual roles played by composer, performer, and audience in a concert setting. The evening will consist of several works whose goal is to create a homogeneity between these three roles.

As a performer, I have extended the potential of the standard guitar with an invention I call the 'Rubbertellie'. In contrast to the traditional guitar, the 'Rubbertellie' is held differently, played differently, tuned quite differently. It is a stretched (hence the prefix 'rubber') non-systemic source for improvisation."

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5

8 pm/\$5.00

**PRAIRIE HOME COMPUTER - EPISODE #9**

presented by Eric Hughes and  
his computer co-host R-U-1-2

SATURDAY, OCT 6 and 13

8 pm/\$4.00

**THIEF**

a one-man play written and  
performed by Gary Duehr

SUNDAY, OCT 14

3 - 6 pm/free

**PRIVATE PROPERTY and SNIPING**

sculptures by Tim Brooks  
at 20 East St, (5th Fl) Boston  
for information call 338-6347

FRIDAY and SATURDAY, OCT 19 and 20

8 pm/\$5.00

**NIGHTSONG and SEA COW**

two performances developed and  
directed by Melodie Arterberry

WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY, OCT 24 - 28 8 pm/\$5.00

**5 EVENINGS/OCTOBER**

new and improvised music by

David Moss	(Wed)
Lowell Davidson	(Thu)
Bob Rutman	(Fri)
Malcolm Goldstein and Tom Plsek	(Sat)
Jon Damian	(Sun)

THURSDAY THROUGH SUNDAY, OCT 31 - NOV 2

**SOUND ART AT MOBIUS (part 1)**

new works by Italian sound artist  
Albert Mayr

Lecture at The Museum School, Boston  
12:30 pm/free (Thu)

**DIES HARMONICA**

installation at Mobius  
9 am - 1 pm/free (Fri)  
1 pm - 5 pm/free (Sat)

**DURATION/PIECES**

performance at Mobius  
8 pm/\$6.00 (Fri and Sat)

Workshop at Mobius  
3 pm - 5 pm/\$3.00 (Sun)

354 CONGRESS STREET

RESERVATIONS: (617) 542-7416

INTERVIEW: RON WALLACE, "ON THE EMERALD NECKLACE"

(On the Emerald Necklace is a walking performance conducted by Ron Wallace, through the series of linearly connected parks designed by the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead in the late 19th century. The Emerald Necklace includes the Boston Common, the Back Bay Fens, the Muddy River, Olmsted Park, Jamaica Park, the Arborway, the Arnold Arboretum, and Franklin Park. Each walk is attended by a single person, by appointment only, and will cover the entire distance of fifteen miles. For more information, or to make an appointment, please call Ron Wallace at 731-1814 any weekday evening between 7:00 and 10:00 p.m.)

DM: How do you consider On the Emerald Necklace to be an example of performance art?

RW: The reason that this is a performance piece, to me, is obvious. It deals with a subject, with an idea -- that is, the space of the Emerald Necklace as a model. It deals with this idea right in the space and right in that time. It deals with that directly. In other words, I as an artist am not taking the Emerald Necklace and writing a book about it, or I'm not taking it and presenting it to you through my eyes. I'm not filtering it. I'm going on a walk with you, I'm sharing it with you and I'm expecting you to work just as hard to share it with me as we walk. So in other words we deal with what the thing is, directly in it. To me that's the essence of performance: you deal with space and with time not by talking about space and time but to be in space and time.

When I first thought about doing the piece, I thought if I do this with just one person, I won't get to do it for very many people. Then I started trying it out with close friends, performance artists and so on, and the first time I tried it out I realized that there is no way you can do it with more than one person. As soon as you add the third person, the whole tone of this experience changes. The other two or more people slip into the role of listening to the interpretation of the park or the space we're in -- in other words, filter it through my eyes. And they will stop looking at it and listening to it -- as much. They'll have to do some of it because they're there but they'll be looking at me, listening to me. It's only when you work with one person that a true dialog can exist, and a true sense of sharing. That's the best chance that the person you work with will have his or her eyes really open and will really be looking at things.

As far as the piece goes, I'm really more interested in larger issues. I'm interested in the Emerald Necklace as a model for more general principles. I'm using the walk to explore general ideas about performance art, and I'm using the information that I get from the walk to understand more about general principles about how things work.

DM: Do you want to talk about those general principles more specifically?

RW: I think it's still very early to be talking about those things. Olmstead didn't approach the work as an artist who wants to make things to represent man or anything. He didn't approach it as a technician or as a craftsman who wants to keep plants looking very nice. He approached it as a kind of social experiment. He approached it as if the park was going to be an instrument of democracy. This was his great belief. So he took a lot of information -- about people in the city, about culture in general, class structure, about economy and the psychology of being in the city. The parks evolved from this viewpoint, this philosophy. Not because he sat down and drew lines on a piece of paper. They evolved because he took all this information, he assimilated it, and he used it. The fascinating thing about it is, that although it was designed by Olmstead, he was really just a kind of vessel for all these principles.

In essence, I identify so much with Olmstead because he was a generalist. The Public Garden he had nothing to do with. He included it in part of his design because it was convenient. That park is about as anti-Olmsteadian as you can get. It was designed as a work of art by the person who designed it. He did sit down with a piece of paper and drew a symmetrical design and used French curves to shape the water and so on. He was interested in making a picture, and that's what the Public Garden is today. It's just a pretty picture. It isn't a living work of art. It isn't elastic -- it doesn't evolve with the city.

DM: Having established that this piece about the Emerald Necklace is a work of performance art, let's shift the angle and ask, how do you see it as a work of art at all, rather than as a guided tour or nature walk -- however much impassioned.

RW: That, to me, is very simple. It is a work of art because it is an experience that I learn from. I've already given walks to people who say that it is an experience that they learned from, and immediately, that, to me, is a sign that it is a work of art. I think that's what makes a painting a work of art. It's not a picture for someone when they're looking at it, it's an experience -- they don't see the frame, they experience it.

DM: Just to push this further -- could you extend that and say that if you go to a bird sanctuary and hear a guided tour given by someone who knows what they're doing, which is an experience from which one learns, would you be willing to call that a work of art?

RW: I think about that question a lot. Actually it doesn't worry me at all. It almost seems a little specious to say it, but it almost doesn't make too much of a difference whether I call something a work of art or not. I can hear a lot of people groaning when I say that!

As part of that I have this very strange belief that I don't think is held by a lot of other artists: that artists are not elite at all -- that they are not special people in the culture. That the most successful and the most creative people in any field, in any endeavor are the people who are in tune with the general principles that will help them to be more successful with whatever they're doing. So using that argument, it could very well be that the person giving a walking tour is doing a work of art, in that sense.

DM: I'm curious about how you first got involved with Olmstead and the Emerald Necklace.

RW: Well, there's two threads there that I can follow. The first thread is how I learned about Olmstead. I went to Mass. College of Art, and of course the Riverway and the Fens kind of loop around Mass. Art there. So I would occasionally cut through those parks, or spend part of an afternoon reading in them. And then occasionally I'd be driving with friends as I was heading along the Jamaica way. So I was exposed, little by little -- about the only part I wasn't exposed to was the Arboretum and Franklin Park. Then one day I was reading an article in the Phoenix about the Emerald Necklace. They focussed in on how the Parks Department had abused it in the past few years, and talked about the infamous Sears parking lot that has obliterated part of it. They laid out the route of the Emerald Necklace and immediately I knew that I had already gotten the image of these spaces in my head. They were already connected, I had felt their connectedness driving past them or walking in them. So when I read it finally, it brought that to the forefront. And I was determined to explore why and how I had that reaction. Because I knew there must have been tons of levels that were working on my subconscious when I thought about those parks of when I looked at them.

The other thread is that in my performance art, I've gone from doing very structured, scripted performances, when I was at Mass. Art, in which I didn't participate. And then I started participating in them, and then I started doing solo performances that were still very structured and scripted. And then slowly my work began to be presenting things less and talking more about the space, and about the time the performance was in, addressing the moment that we were in. So this seems to me just another evolution.

This is probably the most complicated thing I've ever done. On any level. To take a walk through the Emerald Necklace, and to attempt to do it as a performance with one other person -- it can't escape being complicated. Whereas a piece like Bridges [performed at Mobius last December] is very simple. All you have to deal with is inanimate objects, slides and tapes and audio equipment. Those things are all very simple. It's very easy to put together a performance with hundreds of slide projectors and tape decks and things like that. That's very easy to me now. What's hard is to do this.

I have to admit, I've been talking pretty high-toned here, but it's very difficult to relinquish control. Early on, when I was working on this piece I had all kinds of structures and all kinds of strategies for structuring this performance. And I have a lot of notes on that, which I'll never show anybody, on numerical systems and ways of flipping coins to determine the way you walk. And all of that just fell down like a house of cards after I walked with the first person, and I confronted the activity, and realized that that just wasn't going to work. It had nothing to do with the Emerald Necklace. You have to take it, you have to be interested in it and receive it for itself. But I can't give it to you. And that, I think, is a very hard notion for artists to get out of their heads. That's been the hardest thing, that not everything they see is manipulated by me. And I'm totally convinced that that's the way to go.

## EXPERIMENTAL

A central term at Mobius, and a buzzword. A word that accurately describes the spirit of what we perform and present, and a word with a meaning so hard to pin down that it frustrates and baffles us. A most necessary word - if only we had another!

What follows is the first in a series of definitions, descriptions and conceptions relating to the word

\* X P \* R \* M \* N T \* L.

Experimental, adj. 1. Based on experiments: Chemistry is an experimental science. 2. Used for experiments: We worked in the experimental room. 3. Based on experience, not on theory or authority. 4. Of the nature of an experiment; testing; trying out; This trip will be only experimental.

Experimentalism, n. The doctrine or practice, esp. in the fine arts, of experimenting freely with new techniques, forms, media, or the like.

--from the World Book Dictionary

What is the nature of an experimental action? It is simply an action the outcome of which is not foreseen. . . . Among those actions the outcomes of which are not foreseen, actions resulting from chance operations are useful. However, more essential than composing by means of chance operations, it seems to me now, is composing in such a way that what one does is indeterminate of its performance.

-- John Cage, 1958

## YOUR RAVING REPORTER

In the May 29, 1984 Nine Days a Week section of a well-known Boston weekly, there appeared this notice of a recent Mobius Theater piece:

"Peter Sellars' dance/performance work of last year was called 'Sudden Difficulties'. Dan Lang's new video/performance work is called Obvious Obstructions. Perhaps performance artists are becoming less naive."

When faced time after time with the easy cynicism and uninformed glibness which a comment like this exemplifies (was the listing intended as an occasion for abuse?), it's tempting to give up this whole critical response business as a bad job. Those of us who work seriously in experimental performance in Boston know that it's very difficult to get reviewed, or sometimes even listed, without being subject to remarks that speak most clearly to the gleefully held prejudices of writers who would rather have been elsewhere that evening. If a review simply reflects a lack of understanding of the fundamentals of a piece, without going on to indulge in character assassination, we breathe a sigh of relief as if the writing was actually of some help.

As a member of Mobius Theater for several years, I had gotten into the habit of not reading reviews at all: not only those of Mobius performances, but of any work done by anybody in Boston. It all seemed tainted. I said to myself, until these people get themselves educated about the avant-garde (it's easy enough to do) and leave off their goddamned punning headlines, I don't want to know anything they've got to say. As for their power over audiences,

well, our audience knows better and will come anyway. A psychological survival tactic, a way of keeping one's soul erosion at a minimum.

It's beginning to be clear to me, however, that this hermit crab response has some serious drawbacks. First, public silence about a destructive piece of writing constitutes public agreement with it. The task of building an audience clearly involves more than refining our P.R. techniques; it requires combatting information and acting aggressively as advocates for our work. Certainly, it's not likely that anyone has the desire or energy to fight all possible battles, but there are some which need to be engaged, which ought not to be sighed or cursed away.

However, of potentially greater power is the knowledge we already have of the inclinations and temperaments of particular critics. They range from those who delight in giving pain to those who are (yes) actually in sympathy with at least the desire to experiment and may in fact be advocates of new work. We have, I feel, a responsibility to open and keep open as many lines of communication with the latter as possible. Not in order to get chummy or to do their homework for them; rather, to keep the issues surrounding our work focussed, to assert the strength of our aesthetics, to establish the fact that confused chuckles and glib dismissals are not adequate as responses to our best efforts.

We have the power to influence the context in which our work is perceived, and it is power that we need to begin to use.

--- David Miller

# SOUND ART AT MOBIUS (part 1)

## DIES HARMONICA and DURATIONS/PIECES

Composed and performed by Albert Mayr of Florence, Italy

Dies Harmonica will be performed from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Friday, November 2, and from 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 3. There will be no admission charge.

Durations/Pieces will be performed both days at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets for these performances will be \$6.00, \$4.00 for students.

Albert Mayr will give a free public lecture on Thursday, October 31, at 12:30 p.m. at the Museum School.

Finally, he will lead an informal workshop at Mobius on Sunday, November 4 at 3:00 p.m. Workshop fee is \$3.00.

The following text is excerpted from Mr. Mayr's writings and his descriptions of Dies Harmonica.

Much has been written and said about music's time, much less - at least in recent epochs - about time's music. Today this most subtle, yet most powerful form of music finds fewer and fewer listeners. It has become, in fact, harder and harder to listen to. The "congruent melodies," i.e. "the rhythms of times which were given to us to alleviate our labors" (as the 13th-century music theorist had put it) have long since been silenced and drowned by subsonic noises [the dissonant rhythms of artificial time-structures - Ed.]. In its organization of time, Western civilization has, to an appallingly large extent, replaced rhythmic aliveness with abstract measures, reducing it to a "functional mechanism". The main tools by which these measures are set, the clock as we know it and the modern calendar, are obviously, taken as such, remarkable achievements, but in their impact on our lives they are not so much companions enabling us to be "in harmony with things at the right moment" as they are hostile guardians "watching our steps." . . .

It may seem at least unorthodox to link music - which we have come to regard as somethings exclusively acoustic - to obviously inaudible phenomena such as natural and social rhythms, to present an aesthetically oriented discipline as model for everyday time-organization which is mainly geared toward efficiency.

But in the theoretical writings of past epochs, the organization of sound and musical rhythm are put - with striking insistence - in relation to other, inaudible periodicities. Music is seen as the epitome of the concert of periodicities in and around us or even as a weak imitation of this concert. "The highest form of music has no sound," said Confucius. Boetius (ca. 520) said that there are three genera of music: musica mundana, which consists of the motions of the heavenly bodies, the alternation of the seasons and the other environmental cycles; musica humana, resulting from the harmonious interaction between the physiological, intellectual and emotional forces in man; and finally, as the least noble one, musica instrumentalis, which corresponds to our notion of music.

DIES HARMONICA (The harmonical day) is an example of what could be called "speculative time-tabling", or with a more elaborate title, "Alternative models for the structuring of time based on speculative music." The piece subdivides the day in harmonic partials up to the 12th overtone. In the case of the equinoxial, dawn-to-dusk version (fundamental period: 12 hours) this results in the following periods:

- |           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1) 12h    | 7) 1h 42' 48" |
| 2) 6h     | 8) 1h 30'     |
| 3) 4h     | 9) 1h 20'     |
| 4) 3h     | 10) 1h 12'    |
| 5) 2h 24' | 11) 1h 5' 24" |
| 6) 2h     | 12) 1h        |

In turn, this rhythmic structure is made audible through sound: a note corresponding to a partial of an audio spectrum is assigned to each subaudio period: the fundamental to the 12h period, the 2nd overtone to the 6h period, etc.

[Ed. note: At Mobius, Mr. Mayr will perform an 8-hour version of the piece, divided into two parts.]

It is essential that the piece be heard outside the gallery space too. . . the musical quality of the installation resides not so much in the sound events themselves, as in the way they are structuring time; the piece is, so to speak, a different form of public clock; the sound events thus should cover a wide area, meet with different acoustic situations, etc. There are very long silences between the sounds, in which the listeners [indoors at Mobius] should move around, come and go, chat, eat, etc.

Albert Mayr

## COMMEDIA DELL' ARTE WORKSHOP

Commedia as a physicalization of character, motive and relationship through improvisation and text. Study of commedia stock characters, masks, lazzi (comic action) and its application to contemporary theater will be explored. Commedia is a theater of the senses; an acting style that expands your physical vocabulary.

Wednesdays, 5:30-7:30 at Mobius, beginning in mid-October, taught by Laura Sheppard 491-6009.

## SPALDING GRAY - TRAVELS THROUGH NEW ENGLAND: SPRING 1984

Tuesday through Saturday, October 16-20, at the Brattle

Boston Film/Video Foundation presents Spalding Gray in his premiere of 'Travels Through New England: Spring 1984' at the Brattle Theater, 40 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Performances are Tuesday through Friday, October 16-19, at 7:30 pm; and Saturday, October 20, at 3:30 pm. Tickets for the opening night performance and reception are \$15 for the general public/\$12 for BFVF members. All other performances are \$8.50 for the general public/\$7.00 for BFVF members. For ticket information call the Brattle (876-6055), BFVF (536-7128) or Concertcharge (497-1118).

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## **MOBIUS**

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