

## **Sympathetic Sentience**

### **Simon Penny/Jamieson Schulte**

*Sympathetic Sentience* is an interactive sound installation which generates complex patterns of rhythmic sound through the phenomenon of 'emergent complexity'. Each of the eight comparatively simple, identical electronic units alone is capable of the most extremely simple on/off chirping rhythm. Rhythmic complexity develops through a chain of communication among the units.

In the installation, each unit passes its rhythm to the next via infra-red signal. Each unit then combines its own rhythm with the rhythm it receives, and passes the resulting new rhythm along. Thus the rhythms slowly cycle around the group, increasing in complexity.

Each unit is receiving, processing and forwarding a continuous stream of data. Each unit 'edits' that stream 'on the fly', adding or omitting an occasional bit. This editing is done in such a way that the 'density' of the sound is 'self-governing'. After an initial build-up period, the system is never silent nor is it ever fully saturated.

The experience of the visitor is of an active sound environment of eight 'channels', in which there is recognizable, but not predictable, patterning.

A visitor can interrupt this chain of communication by moving through the space. This results in a suppression of communication activity and hence reduction of complexity. A long interruption results in complete silencing of the whole group. When the interruption is removed, slowly a new rhythm will build up.

The build-up of a new rhythm cycle can take several minutes. The rhythm cycles are never constant but continually in development. To gain experience of the full complexity of the piece, it is recommended that visitors spend several minutes with the piece in an uninterrupted state.