



Keith Terry.

The Body Code

Keith Terry and friends create their own language of claps, slaps, and shuffles.

Thirty years ago Keith Terry had the light bulb moment that would make him an icon in the Bay Area music scene. He was playing drums for Jazz Tap Ensemble when he suddenly became keenly aware of the way his own body reverberated. Terry realized that any sound he could make with sticks and a trap set could also be achieved by slapping his body. By clapping the soft part of his palms, he'd imitate the sound of mallets hitting a snare. He'd get a dry echo by rattling the bones of his chest, or thwapping the spongy part of his cheeks. He'd grind his knuckles to get the sound of something being scraped clean. He'd tap the soles of his shoes. He became, in Cook and Coles' assessment, a human hambone.

"It was a dance that had its own inherent soundtrack, which I really love," Terry said in a recent phone interview. Over three decades he's compiled a vast repertoire of stage routines and served as a one-man rhythm section for various groups, most notably the a cappella sextet Slammin' All-Body Band (which also features a beatboxer). He's created a surprisingly complex sound palette and given body percussion a sense of technical rigor. Last April Terry received a Guggenheim Fellowship, which helped him launch a project he'd dreamt about for years: an **international body music festival**.

Probably the first of its kind — and definitely a change of pace for Oakland nightclubs — the body music festival will feature a sampling of world groups that Terry might never have known about, had it not been for the miracle of YouTube. Among them are Turkish duo KekeCa, which bases its material on folk rhythms that often occur in odd meters (try 13 or 17); two Inuit throat singers; and the Brazilian ensemble Barbatuques, whose members whose orchestrated body slaps as their only instrumentation. Judging from Terry's descriptions they seem like a strange bunch, particularly the throat singers, who apparently sing into each other's mouths. Balinese com-



poser Dewa Putu Barata will round off the bill with a specially commissioned *kecak* piece, which features vocalists intoning Gamelan rhythms. The event kicks off December 2 with a spate of teacher training workshops, at which Terry and friends will demonstrate their new “codified” language of body movements (wherein they use claps and shuffles to impart rudimentary facts of geometry or language arts). Other highlights include an open mic at Oakland’s Club Anton (Dec. 3), a lecture at the Oakland Museum of California (Dec. 4), and subsequent performances at San Francisco’s Theatre Artaud. For a full schedule, visit Crosspulse.com

— Rachel Swan