

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
VIDEO, MUSIC
AND DANCE

Laurie Anderson

AMERICANS ON THE MOVE

AMERICANS ON THE MOVE is a series of talking songs about movement and distance. It ranges through sociopolitical, economical, sexual and historical issues but its principal territory is language: talk talking to itself. The piece is scored for voice, violin, electronics, saxophone, keyboards, percussion and visual images. Instruments are used for their visual, physical movements and double as tools.

In certain songs, the microphone itself becomes an instrument. The boom and mic cord are electronically modified to produce harmonics of the voice sent through them. In "You're the Snake Charmer", the fingered mic cord evolves from snake to a long stream of oil, phone cord, dog leash, fishing line and other ways out of the closed circuit.

"Well I know who you are baby - I've seen you in that meditative state...
You're the snake charmer...and you're also the snake...
You're a closed circuit..."

And don't you think I haven't seen all those Arabs around--
I've watched them charm that oil right out of the ground--
Long, black streams of that dark energy...of that dark light...
And don't think I haven't watched you falling...falling asleep
You are the shepherd and you're also 1-2-3-4-five hundred sheep
You're a closed circuit baby--you're the snake charmer baby
And you're also the snake."

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Dogs are featured in *AMERICANS ON THE MOVE* as well as snakes; they appear in "The Language of the Future" (written for William Burrows), in "AC Current" (a song about the dogs deliberately electrocuted by Edison in his efforts to discredit Nikola Tesla and alternating current) and in "Walk the Dog", an advice song about going places.

"A certain American sect has completed its research on the patterns of winds, tides and currents during the Flood. According to these calculations, there was a powerful pull in an overall southeasterly direction... In order for the Ark to have landed on Mt. Ararat, it would've had to have started out several thousand miles to the west. This would locate pre-Flood history in upstate New York, and put the Garden of Eden roughly somewhere in Genesee County."

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