

COBRA

John Zorn

Cobra is probably the most celebrated of John Zorn's 'Game Pieces' developed in 1984. It was conceived as a system with very detailed rules but with no pre-conceived sequence of events for a group of musical improvisors and a prompter.

Cobra

MOUTH yellow

1. **P** POOL
2. **R** RUNNER
3. **S** SUBSTITUTE
4. **SX** SUBSTITUTE CROSSFADE

NOSE white

1. **D** DUOS
2. **T** TRADES
3. **E** EVENTS 1, 2 OR 3
4. **B** BUDDIES

EYE orange

1. **CT** CARTOON TRADES
2. **CO** ORDERED CARTOON TRADES with guests

EAR blue

1. **MA** G = G M Δ
2. **GA** M = M G Δ
3. **VA** VOLUME Δ

HEAD red

1. **1** SOUND MEMORY 1
2. **2** SOUND MEMORY 2
3. **3** SOUND MEMORY 3

PALM black

1. **■** CUT
2. **■** CODA
3. **▬** HOLD & FADE

GUERRILLA SYSTEMS Squad Leader + 2 Spotters

TACTICS

1. **♂** Imitate
2. **↔** Trade
3. **▬** Hold
4. **♂** Capture
5. **↻** Switch/Crossfade

OPERATIONS (Squad Leader ONLY)

- ①** DIVISI Memory drone, squad leader tactics, and systems control
- ②** INTERCUT Locus Unit return to same sound
- ③** FENCING Unit with alternates
G. UNIT LIFE SPAN: 7 Downbeats
SPY may cut unit during OPERATIONS ONLY if unidentified.
Unit members may cut at any time
- ④** End of DIVISI superimposition

SOME LOCUS HAND CUES

- ♂** thumb = stop **↔** back & forth = trade
- ♂** hand = rhythm **♂** one = intercut
- ♀** finger = pip **↗** cut = change
- ▬** hand = drone

John Zorn, NYC © October 9, 1984

The prompter is not a conductor - they should get their cues from the improvisors using the hand signals. They then relay the ideas to the rest of the band.

Simplified COBRA based upon the 'Portland Rules'

Hand Signal	Card	Meaning
Mouth 1	POOL	Start of a new section. Players may start (or not) to improvise freely. If they are continuing the style must change.
Mouth 2	SOLO	Start of a solo for the cued player(s). No one else plays.
Mouth 3	SUB	Cued players solo is taken over by another at the downbeat.
Mouth 4	SUB X	Cued players solo is taken over gradually by another.
Eye 1	CARTOON	All solos stop. Everyone plays sound fragments.
Eye 2	CARTOON O	Solos may continue. Everyone plays sound fragments but only on cue.
Ear 1	MUSIC CHANGE	Current improvisers continue to play but the musical style of their improvisation must change radically.
Ear 2	GROUP CHANGE	All those currently playing stop. All other play BUT IN THE SAME STYLE.
Ear 3	VOLUME CHANGE	The volume must change radically.
Nose 1, 2, 3...		Saves' the current section of music. Remember it and it can be recalled later. When recalled it must be played as exactly as possible.
Palm 1	CUT	Everything stops immediately on the downbeat.
Palm 2	CODA	Everything comes to a conclusion and stops.
Palm 3	HOLD & FADE	The note or phrase is held or repeated slowly fading out.