GEO first worked with George Lewis in 2003 when he came to Glasgow with the international composers and improvisers ensemble from muRRiGhD. Their first collaboration took the form of a unique large workshop led by George and a stage filled with musicians from both ensembles. We maintained links with George and in 2007, commissioned MuRRigHD to write a new piece for us. The resultant composition, Artificial Life, was first performed in December of that year and is a key composition for the band in terms of opening up new possibilities for larger ensemble improvisation. Exploring these possibilities with George was a watershed moment for us. The final rehearsal, where we played completely free, was so powerful and liberating that we felt it marked a new development for us. So we released it as a CD-Metamorphic Rock. However, the recording of the premiere of Artificial Life was lost and we had to wait until 2012 and our 10th anniversary festival to record this piece, again with George playing. This time we were also lucky to have one of our other key collaborators and sources of inspiration, Magpie Nichols, join us. George’s approach explicitly links musicians and listeners in a relationship that retains respect for other people’s aesthetic and personal sensibilities within an overarching structure of collective responsibility, rather than technical virtuosity. The piece requires, and perhaps enforces, a type of social virtuosity—unscripted-listening and virtuosic-regard making and problem solving. Whether or not we achieve these goals is for others to decide, but we always aimed for this local. George’s original programme note is included below. One of our drummers, Nick Sanford, had to rush off to hospital halfway through the recording session to be at the birth of his daughter. Glasgow was born before the rest of us finished recording. This CD is therefore dedicated to Natasha George Sanford with our love.

Glasgow Improvers Orchestra, October 2012. Artificial Life 2007 is designed to realise a model of group improvisation as an emergent phenomenon based upon negotiation and local intelligence. The work is composed in two parts, either of which may be performed as desired, consisting of a set of instructions, presented impromptu on a CD, the moment of execution and the resulting sounds and silences produced are chosen according to the improvisers’ considered judgement unless indicated otherwise. Although structural components and sonic gestures do recur throughout the work, in performance the use of repetition and snap agreements are preferable to teleological thinking and attempts to articulate or impose global form are entirely eschewed by both composers and performers, as with all improvisations, including our everyday—life human efforts, all aspects of the performance are achieved through negotiation and consensus, and the success of the performance is less a question of individual freedom than the assumption of personal responsibility for the sonic environment.

George Lewis, December 6th 2007, Glasgow.