

Chapter Twenty-eight

A FEW MUSICIANS

JAZZ

JB **Erroll Garner in the Rain**

We mentioned the great pianist Erroll Garner in our recent telephone conversation, remember? Well, I just now put on *Concert by the Sea*, one of my all-time favorite solo piano albums. Wow. He did get into it, didn't he? Back in the '50s, after he had recorded *Concert*, he played a momentary but major moment in my life. Did I ever tell you this story?

I was living in Washington, D.C., circa 1957, a senior in high school, a semi-morose guy (burned out by football fanatics in the towns I came from in Colorado, Texas, and upstate New York, and by a broken heart). I wore a brown leather jacket and felt like a budding James Dean, Marlon Brando, Jack Kerouac, and Lee Underwood all wrapped in one. Music was my only salvation — Dave Brubeck, Lenny Tristano, Miles Davis, Coleman Hawkins, and a number of others, including Erroll Garner. So when Erroll came to town for a weekend at a club in D.C., I borrowed my folks' car, said I was going to the library to study, and headed downtown to see and hear Erroll Garner in a Sunday afternoon matinee performance.

The weather turned bad. Black clouds, then a light rain. I parked the car and walked in the rain to the club. Erroll was standing on the sidewalk outside the club doors,

smoking a cigarette. He wore a long overcoat, collar up, hair slicked back. Heading for the club, I recognized him and of course didn't know what to say. We looked at each other and nodded. I pushed through the doors, walked upstairs — and faced an empty room. Nobody else had shown up. The bartenders and waiters looked at me. I sat down and ordered a club soda (drinking was strictly against the rules in my parents' house). The rains came down harder, pretty soon pounding on the roof.

Erroll trudged upstairs, handed his long coat to the waiter, smoothed his hair back, then looked at me and saw I was just a silly kid, an audience of one. He sat down at the piano (no bass player or drummer), nodded again, smiled, then launched into a full-out, joyously impassioned "It's All Right With Me." (He earlier recorded that incredibly upbeat song in 1955, on *Concert By the Sea*.)

I sat there bright-eyed, entranced, ecstatic, the only customer in the place. He played with such imagination and fire that I was transported up and away from every petty personal misery I had ever known. The rains splashed down on the roof. It didn't matter. In fact, it made that big empty room seem like an intimate living room. Every once in a while, Erroll looked up and smiled at me, knowing he was giving his ultimate best to this crazy kid who felt, understood, and treasured every sing-winging note. It was one of my most unforgettable moments. He gave it all, and I heard it, and remember it to this day.

Afterwards, he shook my hand, asked the waiter for something to write on, gave me his autograph, shook my hand with both of his, and thanked me for being there. Wow. An amazing day, early-on in life. It expanded my vision, gave it greater depth and more meaning. It helped me feel courageous enough later on to follow the road I have created since.

And here Erroll is at this very moment on my turn table, winging his way in that great *Concert By The Sea* album, alive in the herenow, just as joyously scintillating as he was that magical rainy day a thousand years ago.

JSor

Miles Davis

Hi, J,

Wonderful you're into Miles!

I can't say enough about him and his many musical phases. A truly evolutionary artist, one of the few who explored, not only within any given area, but within widely different conceptual zones, many of which he invented himself. He was one of Tim Buckley's role models, a deep, rich source of creative inspiration, courage, and confidence. Miles never stopped growing. He continued learning and continued inventing and exploring to the end.

The *ESP* period you mentioned was one of Miles' best and most popular. With Herbie Hancock, piano; Wayne Shorter, sax; Ron Carter, bass; and Tony Williams, drums, Miles kicked up a storm, not only with *ESP*, but with *Miles Smiles*, *Miles in the Sky*, *Milestones*, *Sorcerer*, *Nefertitti*.

With *Filles de Kilimanjaro*, he began phasing into a new period, with more space, simpler chord changes, extended compositions, less busy-ness, more atmosphere, great stuff. That period culminated and terminated with one of my favorite albums, *In A Silent Way* (which became one of Tim's all-time favorite albums, too).

No matter which phase you check into, you can't go wrong. Miles' early phases were great (one of my favorites was *Walkin'* and later on, *Kind of Blue*, an all-time classic) and his phase with Coltrane and Cannonball Adderly was great. This quintet with Herbie Hancock was one of his Everests. The phase following *In A Silent Way*

upset a lot of people, but there is great stuff in there, too, notably *Bitches Brew* (w/ John McLaughlin on guitar) and *Tribute to Jack Johnson* (Miles' personal favorite for many years; also with McLaughlin). Then some extremely abstract free-form albums with Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, notably *On the Corner*, *At the Fillmore*, and *Live/Evil* that pissed off just about everybody — too abstract, too cerebral, people complained, whatever happened to "My Funny Valentine"?

Of the albums up to that point, some of my favorites include *Porgy and Bess* and *Sketches of Spain* (w/orchestra arranged by the great Gil Evans), *Kind of Blue*, *Filles de Kilimanjaro*, *In a Silent Way*, *Jack Johnson*.

In 1974, Miles put out a first-class atmospheric album entitled *Get Up With It*, a tribute to Duke Ellington, which included the mournful track, "He Loved Him Madly," an album and a composition that deeply moved Tim, and moves me to this day.

In the mid-seventies, Miles came up with one of the most intense, powerful, I dare say magnificent groups in his whole career — *Agharta* and *Pangea* emerged out of this period. I would not recommend them to just any Miles fan, because they are far, far removed from the '65-'69 quintet or the earlier acoustic jazz groups that so many people loved.

Agharta and *Pangea* and the several other albums recorded during this period are heavily electronic; the rhythms are hard-driving, rock-oriented, fierce. Miles does not play conventionally melodic trumpet lines, but speaks and sings more like a voice or an animal (which drove critic Leonard Feather up a wall, but thrilled me when I heard this group at the Troubadour in LA). And the music flows in one continuous roaring stream, punctuated by sharp sudden breaks.

Not for everybody by any means. Too intense, abstract, contemporary, unrelenting. I love it.

Miles' later albums also set people off. Everybody wanted Miles to stick with "Love for Sale" or *Kind of Blue* concepts, which Miles had left behind billions of years ago. Now, in the post-*Agharta* phase, he was tripping off into commercial music, with funky beats and pop song sensibilities. Instead of praising Miles for having the ability to make commercial albums as well as those earlier great "art" works, people damned him as a sell-out.

However, one album during this later period stands out to me. It is not funky or pop-oriented. It's more abstract, very contemporary, and, in my view, one of his best, as well as one of my favorites. It's called *Aura*, composed/arranged by a guy named Palle Mikkelborg. Lots of instruments, wide, spacious, harmonic tapestries, abstract solos within the arrangements, exotic, contemporary, in some places bordering on modern classical music.

As I said above, you can't go wrong with Miles. True, almost nobody listens with open ears. They listen only selectively, picking this or that "favorite" period. That is certainly okay, but they immediately go wrong when they proceed to damn the other stylistic phases because they don't sound like their "favorite" one.

Miles and every other artist who dares to change, grow and evolve has to suffer that kind of moronic condemnation. Picasso got the same kind of pretentious, stupid judgments dumped on him. So did Rodin, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, James Joyce, Henry Miller, and rare pop artists such as my dear old friend, Tim Buckley.

Albert Einstein said it best: "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds."

I like the idea of checking out the albums (perhaps by going on line and sampling

various tracks from different albums; not the greatest way, but available nevertheless). You can then acquire albums you might like, hanging out with them as one might hang out with a friend, listening to them often as you absorb them, then following leads, suggestions from friends who know what they are talking about, reading a few articles, whatever. You know, exploring.

Each time you find a zone, place, time period, stylistic phase that you like in Miles' music, then delve into it more deeply. It doesn't matter whether somebody else likes or dislikes that phase. MILES liked it, and that is good enough.

The only question relevant to a good listener is, "Exactly what was it Miles found beautiful, worth while, deeply moving?" Seeking that answer by listening is a joyful journey. The A-ha! experience is a thrill. It opens new doors every time.

Interesting sidelight — although I never got to interview Miles while I was writing for *Down Beat*, I did interview Herbie Hancock (two or three times), Tony Williams (a cover story), Ron Carter, Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea (two major features with Chick), John McLaughlin, and Keith Jarrett (not for DB, but for the *L.A. Free Press*).

A friend of mine recently said, "As you ramble on through life, brother, whatever be your goal, keep your eye upon the doughnut, and not upon the hole."

MR

Bill Evans

So happy for you that you are enjoying pianist Bill Evans' album, *You Must Believe In Spring*. He was an extraordinary musician who recorded dozens of albums.

Smooth, subtle, lyrical. He did not exactly evolve, but seemed to emerge in full flower, and then, like Osho's rose, shared his perfume with the world and passed on.

He used to sit at the piano, eyes closed, hunched over, his nose nearly touching the keyboard. Giving himself entirely to the music, he cast a quiet, irresistible spell over the room. No showbiz antics, no flash, patter, or jokes. He hardly ever even spoke between songs, just played an unending stream of music in a variety of contexts over the years — solo, trio, quartets with a horn, sometimes an orchestral setting — and his fellow musicians were superb.

For myself, I especially like his solo outings, and his trio albums (with bassist Scott LaFaro in the early days; bassist Eddie Gomez later on, and a variety of drummers, good ones all). Among his last albums, two of my favorites are *I Will Say Goodbye*, and *You Must Believe In Spring* (both with Eddie Gomez on bass, Eliot Zigmund, drums). Great stuff. Timeless.

DS **Keith Jarrett**

And, of course, Keith Jarrett.

As you know, he's done some marvelous improvised solo piano concerts, in addition to his extraordinary jazz trio outings. I finally picked up on him, which I've been meaning to do for some time.

Have recently been listening not only to the *Köln Concert*, recorded a billion years ago, but to some concerts he did in the mid-eighties in Munich. Just ordered *La Scala*, a concert in Italy that I eagerly look forward to receiving soon.

Not only does he improvise masterfully, but I relate more to the psychic *tone* of his

music. There's a bright-guy sparkle to it, yes, even as there is with Cecil Taylor, but a quality of mellowflow too, which I very much like. Plus, Keith varies his stylistic/aesthetic sound pallet more than Cecil, visiting angular atonal jaggedness sometimes, then spacious lyricism, then churning rhythmic zones, then freeflowing streammusic.

I interviewed him back in the early '70s for the *L.A. Free Press*, one of the best interviews I ever had. When I asked him if he constructed a set-list while waiting behind the curtains as he was being announced, he said, "Not at all. To the contrary, I empty my mind of every thought. I clear everything out of my head and sit down at the piano empty. From that emptiness, the music flows out with a life of its own."

Wow. That statement has made all the difference to me in the years since that time.

Keith's liner notes are equally brilliant. I'll quote you a few things, I'm sure, as we go along. He's a good guy to hang out with. Will keep you posted.

MH

John McLaughlin

I think it's terrific that you checked out McLaughlin a little bit, the Mahavishnu Orchestra's debut, *Inner Mountain Flame*.

Indeed, that album was an "inner mountain flame," a beginning, a first statement, as it were, which McLaughlin went on to deepen and develop in later albums, including *Apocalypse*, with his own Mahavishnu Orchestra + the London Symphony Orchestra (incredible final track = "Hymn to Him").

As you can tell by looking at his discography, McLaughlin explored (and continues exploring) music from every possible perspective, including his brilliant Indian

music album, *Handful of Beauty* (the third in a trilogy; only the first has been reissued as far as I know, and, like *Inner Mounting Flame*, was but a beginning. Best by far to date = *Handful of Beauty*. If you can locate it, I urge you to purchase it. I suspect you will love it.)

John is unquestionably one of the greatest guitarist/composers of our time. He continues evolving conceptually, and his technical expertise is unrivaled. In every way, he is brilliant. He's explored acoustic guitar, electric guitar, and at least a dozen different generic types of music — straight-ahead jazz, avant-garde jazz, flamenco music, Indian music, classical music, hybrid forms, the list goes on.

Sri Chinmoy, a visionary musician and poet-Sage, was a major influence on McLaughlin, as he has been for me (albeit to a lesser extent). In fact, the title *Inner Mounting Flame* is an image from one of Sri's poems; and McLaughlin often used some of Sri's imagery for various album and song titles. You might want to look Sri up on the net. A beautiful guy with a worldwide following.

CLASSICAL

SL Glenn Gould: Brilliant, Talented, Interesting

Glenn Gould is one of my favorite classical pianists and favorite human beings. He and I are virtual opposites, but/and I think he's terrific.

You're right, he died early, shortly after turning 50. He was a child prodigy; recorded Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and became instantly famous as a young man in his early twenties. He concertized throughout America and Europe, and was the first Canadian to travel to Russia during the Cold War.

Giving concerts proved too harsh and demanding a life for him (shy, sensitive, a hypochondriac, over-controlling, afraid of intimacy in particular and of strong emotion in general, etc.). To everyone's surprise, he stopped giving concerts in his early thirties, turned to recording, spent the rest of his life mostly in the recording studio, perfecting his many piano albums (especially and most significantly his Bach performances; but Beethoven as well; and, unlike most other classical pianists, a great deal of modern classical music).

Nobody ever mentions his name without labeling him an "eccentric," which he was in many ways. He was also brilliant, an extremely talented, interesting man, somebody I've been drawn to for many years.

RG Glenn Gould: Notorious Recluse

You're right. Glenn was indeed “a notorious recluse,” precisely the reason he's one of the most interesting people I've ever run across.

I first encountered him through a movie entitled "Thirty-two Short Films about Glenn Gould," vignettes spanning G's life from age four until his untimely death at age fifty (in 1982, shortly after he recorded the second *Goldberg Variations*). It stars Colm Feore in his greatest role by far. Definitely check out this flick if you get a chance. Great overview (with terrific music, not only Bach, but Beethoven, Strauss, Sibelius, Schoenberg, et. al.)

Gould was a child prodigy and became a major international star, but found performance to be unbearably pressurized — traveling, being exposed to germs, colds, claustrophobic conditions (he was an extreme hypochondriac); inspected and judged on stage; hashed over by critics; compared, evaluated, damned for not being

conventional, etc. He called concertizing “a blood sport” and played his last concert at the Wilshire Ebell Theater in L.A. after which he retired at age 31. He devoted the rest of his life to recording.

His views on public performances, piano concertos, Romantic music, recording vs live performances, overdubbing and splicing in the studio to create perfect works, and dozens of other subjects are controversial to this day.

He's damned as an egotist by the classical music establishment (because he refused to toe traditional lines and bow to time-honored values and musical paradigms), but celebrated as a creative genius by people like me.

The best biography I've read so far is *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*, by Otto Friedrich. Another good one is *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius*, by Peter F. Ostwald. There's a fabulous collection of Glenn's essays and interviews (he was an equally brilliant writer and speaker), entitled *The Glenn Gould Reader*, by Tim Page. And there's a terrific discussion of Gould's views and works entitled *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*, by Geoffrey Payzant.

I'd suggest you check out "Thirty-two Short Films," see what you think, and take it from there.

Hey, guy, keep on keepin' on!

All the Best, L

SL

Chopin

I find myself drawn more and more to Chopin's music, not only the gorgeous Nocturnes, but many of his other piano things as well, particularly the more introspective, elegant, mysterious, melodically lyrical pieces. Such beauty in his atmospheres! The busier things are wonderful too, often breath-taking, in fact, but these days I'm listening more for personal nourishment. The more introspective, slow, extended, sensitive pieces fill me with high emotion and a sense that my own lyricism is empowered, however modestly. God, I miss Chopin. What a beautiful guy. What a towering, multi-dimensional talent. And he touches my heart as no one else does.

MH

Henryk Gorecki

You asked about Henryk Gorecki. I do indeed know about him, notably his lugubrious *Third Symphony*. It was first performed in Brunswick, Germany, some 50 years after Hitler's attack of Poland, in the rebuilt church of St. Magus. You did not indicate whether or not you have listened to it, but let me say it is a powerful work, beautiful, sorrowful, grandly dignified, a commemoration of people who died under Hitler's boot.

It was one of Jeff Buckley's favorite works, by the way, and a number of other people who have contacted me over the years have mentioned it.

I guess there is something universal in a certain quality of melancholy. Beauty is beauty, whether through tears or joyous celebration. No question about it, there is a darkly compelling power to G's *Third Symphony*.

It's a work that moved me deeply, although it is not a work I have listened to repeatedly (but it is certainly worthy of that approach), simply because as a listener I like to move into more ethereal, bright-light energy zones these days (such as

guitarist John McLaughlin's live album, *Remember Shakti: The Believer*. (Or his great Shakti studio album of many years ago, *Handful of Beauty*), or Keith Jarrett's solo piano recordings, masterful musics all.

ROCK

SL **Jeff Buckley: A Rare One**

I've not kept up with rock music these past few years. What little I have heard has not thrilled me, although I am the first to celebrate the *fact* of each generation's musical flowering. However there are a few individuals that have moved me, one of whom is Jeff Buckley.

When I finished reading Jeff Apter's terrific book, *A Pure Drop*, I ordered two Jeff Buckley CDs and they arrived. At the moment, I'm listening to *Live from L'Olympia* (a concert he gave in Paris, 1995). And, yes, in every note and every word there is that magnificent passion that originally moved you to write to me.

How good it feels to listen to Jeff without comparing him to his father, analyzing the work, judging it, just letting myself be carried away on his emotion-wings. God, what a beautiful soul he was, so alive, burning, soaring, laughing, loving, cooing, celebrating. An absolute joy. I know Tim would have been proud of him.

I smile through my tears and weep through my smiles. Jeff was one of those rare ones, and it has been the rare ones who have always captivated me.

AC **Underworld: Great For Long Journeys of Any Kind**

Underworld is one of the best electronic/trance groups I've ever encountered. They are two British guys who came up in the '90s. I know nothing about them personally, not even their names, but I've been spending a lot of time with them over the past several years. When I mentioned to you in our conversation that this group is electronic, I saw you raise a skeptical eyebrow. Can't blame you, as a considerable amount of modern electronic music sounds thin, cold and empty. However, Underworld also includes lyrics, they are excellent trance composers, and their music is far from cold.

In fact, they are exceptionally sophisticated conceptualists, impeccable arrangers, and they attain amazing body-grooves. They get that rhythmic pulse happening, then overlay marvelously complex tracks, each adding a new and different dimension to both the music and the vocals. The vocals themselves become sonic colors (rather than personality-based narrative storylines; in fact, I have no idea what they are talking about in the lyrics; I simply enjoy the vocal sound interwoven with the instrumentals). They are intelligent guys who have clearly studied orchestral arranging, bringing to their songs unending levels of subtle complexity — one of the reasons Sonia and I enjoy them so much. Every time we listen, we hear something new. And the way they sequence the songs is usually perfect — intensity, flowing into lyricism, back into a different shade of intensity. Great for love-making. A very sexy duo, these guys.

One of their best CDs is *One Hundred Days Off*. It has held up marvelously well over the years, perhaps especially between the sheets. If you check that album out and like it, I'd suggest you also hang out with *dubnobasswithmyheadman* (probably their very best overall album), and their "Best of" CD, *Underworld — 1992-2002*.

I don't personally know anybody else who has heard this group or these albums, so I don't have comparisons. I do know that I find all three CDs get better with occasional listenings over a long period of time. Great for long journeys *of any kind*.

COUNTRY

MR

Waylon Jennings

Waylon Jennings (who died just recently) is one of the greatest country singer/songwriters you could ever listen to. Don't let the word "country" throw you.

Waylon had an incredible voice, deep heartsoul, enormous compassion — and was sometimes a heck of a lot of upbeat fun. He recorded dozens of albums during the last 30 years or so, many of his best ones in the '70s and '80s.

Along with fellow "Outlaws" Kris Kristofferson (one of the best songwriters of all country and rock writers), Willie Nelson, and the great singer/songwriter Mickey Newberry, he revolutionized country music and helped bring it well into mainstream musical life, without sacrificing the deep heartsong quality of first class popular music everywhere (today's country music seems to be a corporate wash-out, a diluted, superficial, middleclass distortion of the real thing). Waylon was independent, rebellious, fun and funny, one of America's great ones.

That doesn't mean you will automatically like him, of course, but I think if you get into his music a little, you'll find a jewel of a talent there.

If I were to recommend one album to start with, it would be *Greatest Hits* (including Amanda, Ladies Love Outlaws, Good Hearted Woman, Luckenbach Texas [my personal favorite], Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys and others).

Other good albums include *Ol' Waylon*, *Dreamin' My Dreams* and the fun and funky *Never Could Toe the Mark*. I'd suggest you check out *Greatest Hits* and take it from there.

SPACEMUSIC

AS **Greeting Moonlight Light-to-Light W/Harold Budd**

Hi, gal,

In a pensive mood tonight. Listening to a wonderful CD entitled *The Room*, by Harold Budd, piano/synth, a broody kind of guy whom I interviewed many years ago, one of my heartfelt favorites.

I enjoyed the music of nearly all of the people I talked with, but some remain in my bloodsong to this very day. Once in a while, when I find my mood spiraling into theirs, I return to their music, say hello, hang out. . . .

There's a perspective here so direct, so personal, so unique, that all the "universality" yak-yak simply cannot touch it. I do love the quiet times, in the middle of the night, where the moonlight is so silver and true and alive that no one else has ever seen it before, not like this, not through these eyes. It's where each music-tone streaks down through thought and feeling to the very core, awakening

inner light that greets moonlight light-to-light. All other things disappear, yes. What a kind and gentle place, where breath is warm, touch is true, no rush, no haste, just being, lost, afloat in light.

An hour of bliss is good anywhere, anyhow. I've never understood anything, and all of it is good.

Seek and find the music within you. It will always lead you right. When the song and the light are right, sometimes a dance, sometimes a dirge, sometimes clean, clear and true, sometimes gentle in shades and shadows, follow the music and say hello to yourself and the music every way you are. . . .

Best, L

MH

Budd & Eno

You're absolutely right when you observe that the Eno/Budd collaboration on *The Pearl* is vastly different from Eno's Roxy Music, Genesis, and early solo albums, all of which were semi-interesting but comparatively conventional. As Eno grew and developed, he evolved into spacious ambient music and accomplished a great deal in that domain. (He is, by the way, a brilliant music theoretician. If you haven't already, look him up on the net and see if you can find some of his essays. Great stuff, extremely well articulated.)

I already mentioned a couple of Budd/Eno albums, both of them timeless, *The Pearl* and the equally atmospheric and deeply engrossing *Ambient 2: The Plateaux of Mirror*. Keep in mind that *Pearl* and *Plateaux* are primarily Budd's works, with Eno working as a producer and studio wizard to create timbres and spaciousness for Budd's music. Both of these albums are personal favorites of mine. I know that if you set aside reading or writing or other activities while listening to these albums, and simply light a candle and lie back and bring your full, relaxed consciousness to

these musics, they will transport you into mind-states that you will find amazing in their quiet potency.

One of Eno's most engrossing albums in this Spacemusic domain is entitled *Ambient 4: On Land*. It is strictly Eno's work, with a number of other luminaries participating (including Bill Laswell, Jon Hassell, Daniel Lanois, and Michael Brook). Definitely listen to this CD with full presence. You will find it stimulating in a refreshingly original way, and psychologically incredibly rewarding. Subtle, otherworldly, spacious, darkly hued, deeply inner music. Good stuff that you will be able to enjoy off and on for years to come.

Lastly, Brian's brother, keyboardist Roger Eno, has done some terrific work in this introspective spacemusic genre, including an album that may no longer be available. It's entitled *Voices*. Kind of dark, slow moving, broody, engaging and atmospheric in a comforting way. If it has been reissued on CD, definitely listen to a clip or two and see if you like what he's doing.

O **Steve Roach**

Steve Roach is one of the most deeply engrossing musicians I have ever encountered. In his earlier years, he was a motocross rider in the San Diego area. He drove north to L.A. with his synthesizers and for a while earned his living wearing a white “space” suit and working in a bio-chemistry lab. At night, he composed and sometimes performed live. Sonia and I met him when attending a concert by guitarist Nels Cline. Steve opened the show, playing the kind of exuberant rhythmically oriented electronic power music he later recorded on *Empetus*. He blew us away with his positive energy and musical originality. From that time on we have been great followers. In the 30-odd years since, Steve has recorded over 45 albums and is still counting. Included among his many titles: *Structures From Silence, Dreamtime Return, Origins, Land Mass, New Life Dreaming, Space and Time, Stream of Thought, Mystic Chords & Sacred Spaces*.

One of his greatest purities is his lack of formal training. He has with deep conviction created a style, a sound, a harmonic approach, and a rhythmic orientation that is unique, idiosyncratic, personal, and inimitable. I find myself playing his CDs for hours on end, saturating my workroom context with his atmospheres.

I wrote to him not too long ago and said, “You tap into profound pre-rational layers of our primal human consciousness, taking me/us back and down into those nonverbal, primitive-and-fundamental zones of the psyche that are rarely, if ever, explored by others with the kind of grace, potency, conviction and intelligence that you demonstrate either alone or with your occasional super-simpatico collaborators. Between that and its correlate, the nature connection you sonically establish so well, I feel transported back to levels of my own humanity that I have otherwise so often forgotten. For me, it's a new psycho-sonic adventure every time out, a journey into the depths of my pre-verbal, universal humanity.”

Of all of the Spacemusicians I know, Steve Roach stands out as one of the very best, not to be missed.

AC Henry Wolff : Tibetan Bells

Classically trained Henry Wolff is one of my all-time favorite musicians, albeit another one of those great composers and practitioners who remains a virtual unknown. Back in the late '60s he collected over one-hundred Tibetan bells in India and elsewhere, and has created a body of extraordinary and absolutely original music ranging from the exquisitely subtle to the fiercely searing.

In 1971, Henry and his wife Nancy Hennings recorded *Tibetan Bells*. At the time, the music baffled virtually everyone, because it was the first album in the world to

make use of the then-unknown Tibetan and central Asian bells. It was also the first to use the bells to venture into an innovative East-West aural exploration of the cosmic vision embodied in Tibetan Buddhist teachings. As well, *Tibetan Bells* opened the doors to an emergent new generic body of cross-cultural music that some listeners called New Age or Spacemusic, and remains as a genre classic to this day. Whatever the marketing category, in terms of instrumentation, concept and presentation, Wolff and Henning's music led the way into a new dimension of psycho-acoustic consciousness. Discerning listeners found themselves thrilled by these new developments then, even as they do today.

Over the years following *Tibetan Bells*, Wolff and Hennings recorded four more albums on the Celestial Harmonies label: *Tibetan Bells II* (1979), *Yamantaka* (recorded 1982; released 1983), *Tibetan Bells III: The Empty Mirror* (1988), and *The Bells of Sh'ang Sh'ung* (1991). Album by album, the music becomes deeper, richer, fuller, and ever-more engrossing.

In all five works, there is great beauty, extraordinary subtlety, and intense psycho-activating power, without superficial tinkling, foot-tappy rhythms, or cowbell pastoral charm. Neither is there a Euro-American sense of the omnipotence of reason or of the invincibility of individual/cultural egohood. There are few familiar "notes," and few if any clear-cut Western harmonic combinations equivalent to those based upon Western scales. The music is simultaneously modern and immanently accessible, and profoundly ancient, abstract and challenging.

In dozens of different formulations we hear throughout these works an eerie, supremely subtle enharmonic music in which high-pitched bells ting like ice-blue stars singing in space. Cymbals whirl and gongs crash. Bells drone and spiral, creating interpenetrating frequencies that clash and merge and clash again, setting up colliding sequences of furiously oscillating "beats." Some bells and bowls quietly shimmer like wind chimes. Others snarl and howl like archetypal demons.

It's amazing stuff, because the music operates almost entirely on a psycho-spiritual level that for the most part transcends personal emotion and conventional Western listening experiences. Often it psychologically begins at that point where life as we know it ends, where the world of familiar referential forms is left behind, and Buddhist Emptiness begins.

If I were to pick only three, they would be *The Bells of Sh'ang Sh'ung*, *Tibetan Bells III (The Empty Mirror)*, and *Yamantaka*. Give them a go, yes? They may well change your life forever!

All the best, L

A NEW YEAR'S EVE

MH Herenow American Frontier Folk

For the first time in about 90 years Sonia and I stepped outside of the house on New Year's Eve and attended a party. Didn't stay very long (left around 9:30), but had a wonderful time. Normally, I feel a little uncomfortable at parties (still have not mastered the art of chit-chat). These people, however, were/are warm-hearted folks. Turns out several of them are old hippies, which does not put me off, although I never did fit into that social stratum, and many play guitar or other instruments.

So to Sonia's and my delight, nine of these good folks picked up their instruments and played for an hour or so — mostly old folk-type songs (“Amazing Grace” and other semi-churchy tunes, many with a beat). They had four six-string guitars, a 12-string guitar, a couple of bass players, two accordion players (!), and they all sang. It was terrific.

Reminded me of how it must have been in 19th Century frontier America, people in the mountains around the campfire at night, entertaining themselves in good-old-down-home fashion. Truly folk music — acoustic music made by good-hearted, local people who have nothing to do with "ambition," "making it," the "music biz," "Hollywood stardom" or any of the rest of it.

It was one of the nicest New Year's Eve get-togethers we've ever attended. Felt good. No big deal. No stress. No hysteria. Just good feelings all around.

It felt like I reconnected with music's roots, the fundamental, celebratory, non-ambitious, non-self-conscious origins of the musical impulse itself. I remember that warm-hearted evening to this day.