

Sound Source

Sonic reflections from Gary Diggins

Sound Exploration

Over dinner, the topic turned to music. "Who inspired your musical direction?" the guest asked. "Neil Armstrong," I replied.

Although he was an astronaut, Neil's trip to the moon spun my artistic path off on a cosmic direction. On that momentous evening when a lunar module was parked at Tranquility Base, I was gigging with a soul band at the University of Windsor. Someone rolled a black and white television out on stage. The music stopped. We all gawked at Neil climbing down the ladder.

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," said a voice that sounded a million miles away.

Off the cuff, a slow, rhythmic groove started up. I grabbed a cowbell, went into the audience, and guided everyone into a huge circle. Instantly, beer bottles, pop cans, and even lighters were transformed into percussion instruments. Voices blended into shouts and chants. Dancers leapt into the circle with abandonment.



Thousands of miles above, thanks to scientific advances, an astronaut walked on the moon. Thousands of miles below, thanks to esoteric urges, a group of strangers formed an impromptu community. I was hooked.

Sound continues to take me (and my traveling companions) on wonderful expeditions. These explorations, usually fueled on improvisation, enable participants to journey into places that nourish the soul, promote cooperation, heal old wounds, or open the imagination.

For many of us, improvisation has become a metaphor for how we conduct our lives. Our sonic quests teach us how to dance with the unknown and embrace new frontiers with curiosity rather than anxiety. Unrehearsed sounding asks us to trust that each step along the path will emerge, as it is needed, in the moment.

*"Spontaneous creation comes from our deepest being and is immaculately and originally ourselves."
- Stephen Nachmanovitch*

Just as all living things must adapt to change, so does improvisation involve adjustment to surprises in the instant. Essential life skills are developed in the process: being able to listen deeply, harmonize with others, assume leadership, support the whole, and surrender to a greater wisdom.

In this spirit of play, may all your spontaneous sound making help you journey to the moon and back. Thanks Neil.

Gary Diggins

(((For further information please contact Gary Diggins at:)))
(416) 482-2783; e-mail: gdiggins@aol.com