

Records in Review

by W.L. Meyer

For a young man, Mike Oldfield seems to have been around for a long time. At age 17 he was playing guitar with Kevin Ayers and the Whole World Band and by the age of 21 he had completed the highly successful "Tubular Bells" lp (remember the theme from the "Exorcist"?).

Unlike many modern electronic music composers, such as Edgar Froese, Larry Fast, Manuel Gottsching and Klaus Schulze to name the most prominent, Mike Oldfield tends not to rely on totally electronic forms of music but also uses traditional 'folk' instruments. On his records, instruments as obscure as uilleann pipes, bodhrans spinets, timpanis and African drums are heard in conjunction with electronics and taping wizardry. I suppose one could 'classify' Oldfield's music as a balance between traditional folk styles (e.g. Chieftans, Steeleye, Span) and modern electronics (e.g. Ash Ra Temple, Tangerine Dream, Synergy, etc.). Oldfield does not only slow himself down by using only traditional instruments nor does he alienate the average listener by producing a wall of synthesizer strings and bubbling noises common to the German synthesizer giants. Thus Oldfield's music is a bit more "human" than the technical perfection (still beautiful when you allow your imagination to run rampant with it) of a work like Tangerine Dream's "Zeit" or Ash Ra Temple's "Join Inn". Similarly, Oldfield's electronics brings traditional music into the modern age. This mix of old and new is what makes Oldfield unique. In my opinion only David Bedford and Franco Battiato come close to Oldfield's style of music.

Side one opens up with a slow siren-like hum of voices (reminiscent of Bedford's "Odyssey" lp) that quickly give way to the main musical theme of "Incantations". For some obscure reason, known only to Crom and Ymir, this theme reminds me of Gustav Holst's "The Planets" (which in turn I identify with old movie soundtracks!). Overall the main theme of "Incantations" is a lively theme with orchestral strings constantly vibrating in the background. Along its development (ie. the theme's development) a repetitive "bubbling" synthesizer sound enters along with a constant tinkling sound. When these sounds are eventually mixed with flutes and recorders the result is the deep resonating sound of the fully developed main theme. Eventually, an electric guitar makes its mark that results in a quickly changing "soundscape" that is hard to appreciate on first listen. Just as quickly as the guitar entered, so does African drums that still the air suddenly. Flutes and recorders reverberate between speakers. Later, horns take over the main theme, and become quickly immersed by the "bubbling" synthesizer sounds and the march-type string sounds. This leads to a lively flute-synthesizer-drum piece of music that is similar to a jig or reel. This lasts but a moment as the 'singers' come in with their gentle chants from Ben Jonson's 'Diana'. As I listen to this side again, I realize that the quick shifts in music are very hard to follow with but one listen and this is probably the main reason for the lack of access of this lp's music to the average rock fan.

Side two opens with the rising,

bubbly sounds heard on the first side and accompanied by flutes and whistles. This combination plays on amidst a background of strings that eventually restates the main theme again. Amongst all of this Oldfield gives us an all too brief taste of some gently lullaby-style guitar work. This all leads to a final statement of the Diana 'chant', developing with the aid of an increasingly noisier guitar. At the end of this climax, glockenspiels fill the air as Maddy Prior begins to sing/chant Longfellow's "Hiawatha". Prior's voice steals the side as her recitation progresses accompanied with extremely subtle musical shifts, unlike the rapid shifts on side one.

If the first two sides produced only moments of foot-tapping music, then side three makes up for the lack of the more lively music on the previous sides. Flutes, strings and bells produce a jig and reel like atmosphere and Oldfield lets loose with his electric guitar playing. Like his playing on "Instructions for Angels" (with Bedford again) Oldfield's guitar work is fast paced and relegated to a background role as it screeches away. After about half a side of this style, we get a style of flute-guitar mix similar to old Jethro Tull music. The main theme of Incantations is again given and the side eventually closes with electric bass and guitar playing. Definitely the third side is the most 'climatical' of the lp.

After the electricity of side three, it is a relief to hear the final side opening with the calmness of mandolins synthesizer and piano music. But as seems to be the "norm" for this lp, the calm lasts only a minute or so as "cascading" bell and glockenspiel sounds take over backed by a quieter bass line. An electric guitar whips onto the scene for a brief flourish and is gone as quickly as it came. The music eventually develops into a more frenzied state as double speed guitars, sleighbells(!) and bass climax the side. Calm again settles in and remains for the rest of the side as "Hiawatha" is continued. Its a gentle but forceful finish to the lp as Prior allows a note of triumph to enter in the tone of her voice on the closing verses.

In short, it is Mike Oldfield's increasing use of traditional folk instruments along with rapid changing music that differentiates "Incantations" from his previous works. This album is a must for Oldfield listeners. It is however a bit too expensive and involved for casual listening and so it is advisable for those not familiar with Oldfield's work to stick with "Tubular Bells" or "Ommadawn".

Kurelek at Beaverbrook Art Gallery

William Kurelek is an artist/writer who in the tradition of William Blake, illustrates his writings with his own paintings and drawings. "A Prairie Boy's Summer" is the result of this marriage of two art forms and was produced as a sequel to "A Prairie Boy's Winter".

The artist recounted that the twenty paintings which constitute the "A Prairie Boy's Summer" series were executed in a Saskatoon hotel room "in the dead of a fierce prairie winter". As these paintings are all reminiscences conjured up from the past, the locale of their production is immaterial to the artist.

The uncontrived directness of his compositions reflects the fact that he is largely self-taught. Kurelek does not rely on elaborate technical feats to convey his message, but handles his subjects in a straightforward manner with an uncomplicated palette.

Kurelek refers to his medium as "mixed", something he arrived at himself, to meet his needs. "It is predominately oil, but there is also lacquer, graphite, coloured pencil and pen-and-ink on a gesso base which I scratch through in places where I need a fine white line".

Although these panels rely heavily on nostalgia and project an optimistic attitude toward life, Kurelek is also capable of showing the darker side on mankind but never without the hope of

redemption, his religious faith underlying his aesthetic statement.

William Kurelek, a Ukrainian by birth, began his career as a frame-maker for the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto where Avrom Idcoacs recognized his talents as an artist and encouraged him. His paintings almost always bear his meticulously carved frames which he feels serve

to "enhance the art of picture making". Kurelek died two years ago after a long and painful illness.

"A Prairie Boy's Summer" was acquired by Hiram Walker & Sons Limited and presented to the Art Gallery of Windsor who have undertaken the responsibility of circulating this exhibition across Canada.

A Dialogue with Solitude

The National Gallery of Canada has sent its Heath collection of photographs "A Dialogue with Solitude" to the UNB Art Centre to be shown from November 4 to 28.

The 82 photographs were taken in the United States and Korea between 1952 and 1962 by a young photographer sure of his own vision but struggling for recognition and working in commercial studios for his livelihood.

David Heath was finally recognized with two major exhibitions in 1963, Guggenheim scholarships in 1963 and 1964, and the publication of "A Dialogue with Solitude" in 1965. In 1970 he immigrated to Canada to teach at Ryerson Technical School in Toronto, and now teaches at York University.

The National Gallery of Canada has acquired one of the two known sets of "A Dialogue with Solitude." They are the gelatin silver prints which were exhibited at the

Chicago Art Institute and Eastman House. They are now touring across Canada.

In the foreword to the book, the Curator of Photography of the Art Institute of Chicago describes the collection as "a self-portrait in which the artist himself never appears but is revealed and interpreted by every detail."

The set is divided into sections, beginning with a prologue - the solitude of the individual - followed by sections on love, hate, war, destruction, and alienation. The artist's command of the visual metaphor takes it beyond its most apparent objective of sociological documentation, and makes it a work of art.

The exhibition will open with a public reception on Sunday, November 4th between 2 and 4 pm, and continues until November 28th.

S.O.S. Outreach

S.O.S. Outreach -- a local and university young people are presenting a dynamic coffeehouse this Sat. at 9:00 p.m.-11 p.m. in the Memorial Hall (UNB campus). The group hope to communicate the message of Jesus Christ through various channels -- particularly music and drama. The title of the movement is derived from the Bible from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians when he exhorts christians to put on the helmet of salvation and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

S.O.S. Outreach meets each Sunday at 2 p.m. in the Marshall d'Avray Bldg. Prayer and Bible study are important aspects of the session.

Exciting events are being planned by the group. S.O.S. will also be hosting a program of music and drama on channel 10 T.V. Watch for listings. Also major crusades are being planned for the future.

S.O.S. Co-ordinator is Rah Sandhu, a native of Kenya and B.Ed. student. Other members include Dan Currie, Kevin Thompson, Candy Horsman, Ed Pugh, Sherry Stewart and Sandy Farris.

Saturday's programme will be joined by soloist Gary Alward. All are welcome!



The Artist Looks at the Child
'Dancing Girl' Oil painting by Bruno Bobak in
at the UNB Art Centre, Nov. 4-28



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