

Voyager

The MagellanMusic Newsletter

Winter 2014

As Christmas closes in once more we all ask the question, "What am I going to give this year?" Many of us music heads think of music first, but there's a problem. There is a classic adage that you know you're getting old when you don't like or understand contemporary pop music, but thanks to the online availability of so much music from so many sources, the choices have never been so wide. Is that bad or good? We vote for good. If you take the time to look, to shop, you'll find everything from current to oldies to remote artists from all over the world. So there again is that classic Christmas question, "What am I going to give this year?"

Here are some suggestions. Our first choice, obviously, is **MagellanMusic**. We can't pass up the opportunity to cheat since this is their newsletter, but they're also very good. The best place to find **MagellanMusic** is CD Baby, www.cdbaby.com/all/magellanmusic, who offers all their CD's at very good prices, and downloads are the highest possible sound quality. Plus you can preview their songs at full length instead of 30 second snippets now. You can also get **MagellanMusic** collectibles at www.cafepress.com/magellanmusic. You can get everything from T-shirts to mouse pads to clocks. Another good music website is www.auralmoon.com. They specialize in Progressive Rock, but feature so many obscure bands that you will hear many that are practically unknown. But they also feature links to buy from those artists. Another website that specializes in rare bands is www.psychedelized.com. They mostly feature artists from the 1960's, but a few songs are from private collections that they aren't available anywhere. But they do feature links to everything that's available. Another similar website is www.psychelicjukebox.com. They also feature rare 1960's bands, but contemporary retro bands as well, plus the links to sites where all the songs or albums can be found. Another good shopping idea is browsing **Amazon** and **iTunes**. Both use an interesting feature that suggests other artists in the genre of the particular albums or artists you're browsing. And the more you examine the suggested titles, the more artists you will find. So be forewarned, you may find so many good choices that you'll need pen and paper to write it all down. Another interesting idea, other than music, is vintage collector shops. **The Great Escape** in Nashville, Tennessee is a great example. They have everything from used CD's to LP's to comic books to posters to board games. And they offer shipping for nearly everything. Their website is www.thegreatescapeonline.com. So look around, use our ideas to make Christmas more interesting this year. And remember, good music never fails.

With that in mind, here are some specific titles to consider:

Sean Lennon – Is it possible for a famed artists' son to have the talent of his father? Usually not, but if John could hear "**Midnight Sun**" he might be shocked. It is Retro Rock at its finest. It sounds as though it was recorded sometime in the early 1970's, full of the same wonderful quirks and effects from those years, and just as original. There is no mistaking this album from any other. The band is 'officially' called **The Ghost of a Sabertooth Tiger**, but we music heads know "**Midnight Sun**" is Sean Lennon. And it's a beauty.

Temples – When one hears a terrific tune that sounds like it came from 1969 but discover it came from 2014, the reality of 'retro' music is inarguable. "**Sun Structures**" is simply terrific. Very original. They even feature the classic 12-string guitar a la Beatles, Jefferson Airplane, and the Byrds. **Temples** began as a home recording project but got such a great reaction from this CD that they formed a live, working band. And even more shocking, they were so good that they could be mistaken for veterans. "**Sun Structures**" is a keeper.

The Zodiac – This could be the most surprising rarity we have yet found. Many consider the Beatles "**Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band**" to be the first 'concept' album, at least loosely associated with that term, but the first unmistakable concept album is "**Cosmic Sounds: Celestial Counterpoint With Words Into Music**" by the **Zodiac**. It was released in April, 1967. It isn't just a wash of sounds as the title suggests, it's a rock band playing psychedelia with narration instead of sung lyrics. And they weren't a working band, they were a collage of studio musicians brought together by a producer, engineers, and writers, an effort much like the **Alan Parsons Project** would do a decade later. This album is remarkable in every sense of the word. Surprising enough that it inspired the **Moody Blues** to include narration on their first 4 albums. This is without question a must-have for every progressive minded music fan.

Earth Island – Here we have another one-album wonder from the psychedelic era that deserved much more attention than it got. The band was somewhat inexperienced but good enough that "**We Must Survive**" is a true gem in that genre. It touches on psychedelia, rock, pop rock, and sunshine pop. Not only were all the songs good, featuring top notch vocals, which is the real test for any band, but it is a sort of concept album. It expresses the need for peace and understanding, the motto of that era. "**We Must Survive**" will definitely sweeten any collection.

Curved Air – is a progressive British band from the 1970's who never managed to get into the American market, but thankfully did very well in Europe. They had the unusual knack of combining prog rock, folk, and jazz fusion into a sound all their own. They were so popular that they did several

albums, but our pick is "**Phantasmagoria**" from 1972. It's the one album with all the ingredients to best typify how good **Curved Air** is.

Le Orme – interesting that few know Italy has always been a hotbed for progressive rock. **Le Orme** gained fame as Italy's answer to ELP, but frankly, they weren't nearly as good. It was their first album, "**Ad Glorium**", that we found so interesting. It came out in 1969 and they were a very different band then. They were part of the psychedelic era, were 5-man instead of 3-man, and the whole European scene was as hot as in America. The only dismay is they sang in Italian, but it fits the San Francisco vibe just fine. "**Ad Glorium**" is worth having in your collection.

And now for the bad news. We don't mean to sound glum or defeatist, but to put it bluntly, the music scene is very, very ill. Last year stunning news was announced that music sales was the lowest ever, but this year, unbelievably, it's still worse. Music sales today is the lowest it's ever been since **Soundscan** began tracking CD/digital sales in 1991. Even the largest online seller, **iTunes**, has dropped an alarming 14% this year. After getting over the shock of this news, one can only scratch their heads and wonder what the hell is going on. What has happened? Is music really that bad, or boring? Is it just in America? A money problem? WHAT!?

The staff of Voyager has been following this problem for several years and there are a number of different reasons. It's been a sequence of events that began with the dawn of the digital age in 1987 when CD's replaced LP's as the standard music medium. It was a change so radical that it affected the entire apparatus of the music industry. Then in 1997, during the boom sales of home computers, the MP3 music program emerged that cut loose the revolution of Independent artists; that too changed the face of the music landscape. 'Indies' didn't need record contracts to sell their music, plus it opened the flood gates to all music sales via computer. CD sales fell into the worst slump ever while 'downloading' increased sales very nicely overall, except the enormous number of new buying choices fragmented marketing strategies badly. Everything was suddenly spread wide and thin, causing the adverse effect of over-saturation. But worst of all was the deterioration of the economy and the growing trend of online radio streaming. Cost of living rose rapidly, average salaries didn't, bad enough that consumers were cutting their food money. It was natural that cutting entertainment money was top of the list. That in turn is what has made music streaming another 'revolution' in the current music scene. Listeners can hear as much as they want either for free or very cheap, and they don't have to own the media. And what complicates everything is streaming sites pay the lowest possible royalties to artists. It's little different than corporate industries going all out to cut worker salaries. The typical claim by Sirius, Pandora, YouTube, Spotify, and others is the exposure, a veiled promotion like broadcast radio, that streaming will increase sales for those artists. Obviously it has the opposite

effect. And this is what takes us back to our point - it is why the American music scene today is at its worst ever and still falling. It's like any business; if buyers disappear, so do the artists and so does the industry. Please remember this during Christmas. Buy the music of your favorite artists and listen to contemporary broadcast radio, not music streaming sites. Musicians spend their entire lives doing what they do best, and they deserve our allegiance.

However, there is an upside to these problems, and that is Retro music. A big part of the online music boom was the availability of endless numbers of obscure artists from the 1960's and 1970's besides the many classic titles. Oldies or 'retro' sales were apparently so good that it was almost as if all record labels opened their vaults to sell everything they had, including titles that had never been released until now. By 2008, the combined rock genres were selling so well that it accounted for nearly 50% of the entire music market. In addition, it helped create a resurgence of Retro Rock by contemporary artists all over the world. That includes the surprising resurgence of vinyl LP's, the fastest growing music medium of all. The **Voyager** staff has learned that research on this subject is limited, but we've seen many such artists on various music sites, as well as artists we've discovered personally. The fact is, there are so many retro artists that it could be called a phenomenon. And best of all, sales are holding steady. Again, this leads us back to the point of our Christmas buying suggestions. Whether or not the music scene as a whole is suffering, there are many great artists out there. We just have to shop carefully to find what's good, and it's worth taking the time to do it. Let's look, find and give. It's the right thing to do.

More good news for **MagellanMusic** is a number of music websites are giving them top marks for listening activity. Radio Airplay, ReverbNation, Numubu, and Indaba at one time or another has rated them #1. No one can figure out why but no one is complaining.

One last bit of good news is a young fan from Canada requested an autographed picture from the band. His music teacher was in the hospital for an extended period, he too a **MagellanMusic** fan, even used examples of their music to teach with, so the young man thought such a photo would be a great lift to his day. The band were very moved by this. **Per Jensen** reflected that it's a great example of how music, any music, is a fantastic medicine for the mind and body both. All of us wish this gentleman the best of luck in his fight for good health...

"If we listen, love, learn, and seek, we will find peace."