

Voyager

The MagellanMusic Newsletter

Winter 2015

Christmas? Again???

`Fraid so. Not that it's so bad considering the big smiles from all the credit card companies from raking in so much cash, but for buyers, as always, it can be a nightmare. Too much money is spent, too many people to buy for, and we're drenched with commercials from every possible direction to keep reminding us to keep spending. So as the staff of **Voyager** did last year, we remind everyone to conserve. Only one thing for one person, or family, and get something they need, or will use frequently. Even better is gift cards. They solve a lot of problems by letting the recipient buy as they wish and you not having to decide on a gift. And most of all, give to charity. Salvation Army is very visible at Christmas, which is good, but there are many others, such as Humane Societies. The best way to give is give to those who need it the most.

And since this is the **MagellanMusic** newsletter we can't possibly go without suggesting their music. You can go to www.facebook.com/perjensen01, which is Facebook, or to www.cdbaby.com/Artist/MagellanMusic. You can hear songs at full length, download at 320 kpbs, or get the discs. But best of all, **MagellanMusic** always keeps their prices down and that helps a lot in the Christmas season.

Why does music seem so bad today?

Let's turn on a Top 40 radio station and see what's happening. Oh yeah, "I Don't F**k With You" by Big Sean & E-40. Then there's "F**k You (Forget You)" by Cee-Lo. We also have "Whip My Hair" by G6. And we can't forget "Shawty Is A 10" by the Dream. Or "My Boo" by Usher. Or "Sexy And I Know It" by LMFAO. Or "Holidae In" by Chingy. Maybe "Beauty and a Beat" by Justin Bieber is top of the pops. Maybe the latter seals the fate of contemporary music since Bieber's image is literally a laugh. Of course we could skip that and shop for gems by Young Cannibals, the String Cheese Incident, the Butthole Surfers, the Cradle of Filth, Slightly Stoopid, You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead, and Anal Vomit. Oh yes, we're just itching to get out the ol' credit card and grab some of these wonderful classics...

The question again, why does music seem so bad today? It should be clear. Not that it's completely glommed by the crap just mentioned, there are a few decent songs/artists sprinkled here and there, but extremely little that's 'classic' or will even be remembered for long. Contemporary music is like a junk food factory pouring it on. There's nothing filling or satisfying, just something to put on the shelves that'll sell. And if the shelves are full of

nothing but junk then buyers will think junk is good. That way the next big trend might be something really cheap like trash can banging with some maracas and tambourine thrown in. Nothing better than selling a download for \$1.25 that costs a penny to make. Maybe there's a limerick only heard in record company hallways, "If it smells, it sells!"

It seems that something went wrong in the 1980's, and it's being going downhill ever since. Disco, 'Arena Rock', New Wave, and Punk had rolled in during the late 70's, which didn't offer anything new, and even the great 'dinosaurs' like Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and the Eagles had called it quits. But most notable was the cultural scene had changed, as in lack thereof. The unprecedented surge of hippie lifestyle with Progressive Rock, art, and literature during the 1960's were a thing of the past. Youth changed from Hippies to spineless Yuppies, and why America's new president got away with the most destructive administration ever seen. Michael Jackson, Madonna, and MTV typified the 1980's. Music was plastic, image-laden, superficial, over-rehearsed, and painfully unoriginal. Bands like Flock of Seagulls, Duran Duran, Haircut 100, Spandau Ballet, Oingo Boingo, Dead Milkmen, and Bananarama were big names. If that's not bad enough, Prog Rock masters like Yes, Genesis, and the Moody Blues had become Top 40 bands as well. That alone was enough to make one's heart sink to the floor. Commercialism had completely taken over. Maybe Timothy Leary's advice to turn on, tune in, and drop out was more relevant than ever. At least the satirical Devo band was smart enough to know it - music was DEVOLving.

So that brings us back, again, to that fateful question, why is music so bad today? The answer is contemporary music has completely lost focus. Originality is long gone. There is no way it can be like it was. It's like a tire that's been re-treaded over and over again. The only relief is 'retro' indie bands and they're doing a good job. But it's names like Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Elvis, Miles Davis, B.B. King, James Brown, the Beatles, Dylan, Joplin, Hendrix, Cream, the Doors, Zeppelin, CSN, Pink Floyd, Yes, etc, etc who are the examples that artists are measured by. They're the ones everybody tries to be as good as. They brought rock, soul, jazz, and blues to their logical, artistic conclusion. All the industry has done is push for different directions wearing different masks figuring out new ways to sell it, all the while 'conditioning' young audiences to think it's good. So dig out those great albums and CD's and let it fill your mind. Join it. Let it take you where it will. That is where it's at, and where it always will be.

Christmas suggestions

MagellanMusic is obviously major proponents of music to love and to give, and not just their own. Everyone has a favorite band or title that isn't in their collection, but there are a few lesser known Prog Rock titles that might tickle your fancy.

Bands:

RPWL – is a German band who are arguably the best prog artists of the new century. The surge of 'retro' music in recent times has brought on many, but there is no other that's so original and so good as **RPWL**. One hears tastes of Pink Floyd, Yes, and Alan Parsons in places, sweetened with a pop touch that makes it very accessible, but no mistaking **RPWL** for anyone else. We recommend "**World Through My Eyes**", the one album that seems to best capture the essence of what **RPWL** is about. You can get it here:

http://www.amazon.com/World-Through-My-Eyes-Rpwl/dp/B00SKEABFC/ref=sr_1_9?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1445271814&sr=1-9&keywords=rpwl

Loreena McKennitt – Celtic music may not be prog, but when one discovers a genre that is essentially a world all its own it's a fantastic surprise. Since the legacy of Celtic is European and doesn't apply well to the American culture, finding really good artists is all the more difficult. In this case there is no question - **Loreena McKennitt** is the Celtic master. There is simply no other artist who captures the passion and enchantment as she does.

Loreena has 'the touch'. If there's any downside to her work, it's all her studio albums are so good that you could pick any one of them and not go wrong. So this time we recommend a superb collection called "**The Journey So Far**". It's so chock full of unforgettable tunes that it isn't a 'best of', it's a treasure chest. You can find it here: <http://www.amazon.com/Journey-Loreena-McKennitt-Deluxe-Edition/dp/B00DJYJWTO>

Renaissance – was one of the most unheralded prog bands of the 1970's. Musically they weren't as flashy as bands like Yes and King Crimson, they had a quieter attitude, but still a lot of personality and as good in their own way. One has to adjust their listening motif to best appreciate it, and they too released many great albums. The best we suggest is "**Scheherazade**" from 1975. It was their high point and truly worthy. Get it here:

http://www.amazon.com/Scheherazade-Other-Stories-RENAISSANCE/dp/B0000073BG/ref=sr_1_4?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1445309936&sr=1-4&keywords=renaissance

Klaatu – is a band that should've been a timeless classic and up there with the greats. **Klaatu** were one of very few bands with the uncanny ability to cover different genres as comfortably as the Beatles did, and almost as addictive once it sinks in. But unfortunately, **Klaatu** wasn't a live band and couldn't recover from the continually dropping sales. It's their first three albums that are classics in every way, and with a stroke of luck we found issues of discs with two albums-on-one. We recommend their first two, titled "**Klaatu/Hope**", available here: http://www.amazon.com/Klaatu-Hope/dp/B000056H49/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1445311938&sr=1-1&keywords=klaatu

Gentle Giant – has the reputation of perhaps being the most progressive of the prog bands. Listening to them is so challenging at times that unaccustomed listeners might not be able to follow it, or understand it, much

less appreciate it. Even the odd vocals are almost like a counterpoint to the music. But once you sit back and really listen, **Gentle Giant** unfolds like a wonderful, absorbing book. And like other prog masters, each album is worthy on its own. So we suggest their 1972 album "**Octopus**", which you can get here:

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B005G0YP3M?keywords=gentle%20giant&qid=1445789408&ref=sr_1_6&s=music&sr=1-6

Captain Beyond – was one of those bands that seemed to come out of nowhere, sneak up on you, then knock your senses into next week. **Captain Beyond** may be heavy and intense at times, but they're definitely prog. All three of their albums are good but we recommend their first, the self-titled "**Captain Beyond**". It's the kind of classic that's so good it should be in every collection, and you can find it here: http://www.amazon.com/Captain-Beyond-Remastered/dp/B000003CMR/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1446782420&sr=1-1&keywords=captain+beyond

Fireballet – has been mentioned in a previous newsletter, but we can't help mentioning it again. When their first album appeared (1975) there was no fanfare at all, but prog freaks were bowled over when they heard it.

Fireballet sounded like a cross between **Yes** and **Genesis**, which was practically a fad at the time, but their material was completely original. It's typified by their magnum opus arrangement of Mussorgsky's "**Night On Bald Mountain**", and why the album was named after it. It's a must-have and you can get it here: http://www.amazon.com/Night-Bald-Mountain-Fireballet/dp/B00M45SYVQ/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1445790096&sr=1-1&keywords=fireballet

Amusement tax, did I read that right?

You most certainly did. Chicago in recent times has been going rather bonkers, which isn't unusual for that city, because someone 'woke up' and realized they were in such bad debt that taxing anything might be a good idea. And so they did. Including cable TV, live entertainment, and sports teams. It's effective not just in Chicago, but the entirety of Cook County. In Chicago an Amusement Tax of 5% of admission fees and other charges is applied for live theatrical, musical or other cultural performances with capacity over 750 persons. A 9% tax applies to all other performances and participatory events including movies, sports, amusement parks, circuses, pleasure boat rides, dancing, bowling, tennis, weightlifting, etc. Activities that are primarily educational rather than recreational are excluded.

Initiation fees and memberships to health clubs are not taxed, but per-event or per-admission fees are taxed at 9%. Cable television is also taxed at 9% of charges, though the City issues a partial exemption of the tax to cable television providers. The current amusement tax rate reflects the City Council's 1% increase for both live performances and other events as part of the FY2009 City Budget that took effect on January 1, 2009. All this may

sound like fiction, which it should be, but the Chicago Establishment is getting away with it despite the fact that entertainment is in its own worst slump in memory thanks to the Recession. Let's hope the Feds and other Establishment creeps won't learn of it and apply similar taxes as well, further eroding a badly ailing entertainment industry without any regard at all. We will keep you advised.

A sign of the times

Speaking of an ailing entertainment industry, it's poignant to note that as of this writing (November 2015) there have only been two albums awarded platinum status (1,000,000 units sold). In 1969, by years' end, there were over twenty.

SESAC to merge with the Harry Fox Agency

In the business world that sounds ominous, like AT&T merging with Comcast, but even worse considering it's the music business. But maybe not. SESAC is a royalty collector (like BMI and ASCAP) and Harry Fox is a licensor of songs, which means the two together would simplify the whole process since Harry Fox is by far the largest of license companies. This merger would also include Rumblefish, which is another licensing company but more specialized ('micro-licensing') for specific uses of music such as YouTube. All this would allow SESAC to compress the various efforts into one collective organization for smoother, sleeker operations. But there is a downside. SESAC works for profit, BMI and ASCAP do not. Plus, SESAC is selective; they approve artists for joining, which probably means money makers don't get in. One must then question the possibility of eventual exclusive use of Harry Fox and Rumblefish thus diminishing the processes of BMI and ASCAP. This is a story to watch closely. As it progresses we will keep you informed.

Pandora and Sirius XM get nailed

The music Establishment isn't getting away with it. Internet radio company **Pandora** has agreed to pay the major US record labels \$90 million from streaming pre-1972 songs, which aren't covered under a Federal copyright law but are covered by State copyrights. It's the second big loss for the Establishment, a recent \$210 million settlement with **SiriusXM** satellite radio over the same issue. The settlement covers both **Sirius** and **Pandora's** past plays of pre-1972 music, an out-dated law they were trying to bilk, which it also covers through the end of 2016. At that time both companies will have to reach another licensing deal with the **RIAA** if it wants to keep playing the old music. **Pandora** and **Sirius** also face purported class-action litigation brought by members of the 1960s band **The Turtles**. In addition, an Illinois couple who owned several recording companies in the 1950s and 1960s filed their own lawsuit over pre-1972 songs against **Pandora**, **SiriusXM**, and **iHeartRadio**. That lawsuit seeks payment under New Jersey common law. "Major settlements with **SiriusXM** and now **Pandora** means that an iconic

generation of artists and the labels that supported them will be paid for the use of their creative works," said **RIAA** Chairman and CEO Cary Sherman. "That is a significant milestone and a big win for the music community."

The last bit of news is a surprise that came to **Voyager** by email. An individual from **Gradara, Italy** requested an autographed photo from **MagellanMusic**, and we learned that **Gradara** is not only a town, but a medieval fortress. Construction began in the 12th century yet today it is completely restored and fully functional. It is mainly a vacation attraction, but the surrounding area has a population of over 2000, which features numerous artisans, such as musicians, painters, and sculptors, thus officially recognized as an arts commune. So if anyone should consider visiting Italy, **Gradara** is a place to go.

With all this in mind let us make Christmas this year a good one. Give things that are meaningful, from the heart, such as music. Give things that can inspire and encourage. Things that tell our loved ones we care. If we don't give that, even a little something to put a smile on their faces, then we've given nothing at all.

MagellanMusic wishes everyone light, love, and the happiest of holidays!