

November 2006

**TOP SECRET**

# INTELLIGENCE

Mat Callahan's quarterly newsletter of music, art, and philosophy  
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Dear Friends:

Accompanied by my partner Yvonne Moore, I'm making my second tour this year in the US. In March I spoke at various forums and Universities about my book, "The Trouble With Music". This time around I'm coming to play. Although I've made a few appearances in the San Francisco Bay Area over the last 5 years, this is the first sustained effort to reach out to an audience since I left the US for Switzerland back in 1999. The intervening years have been full of music; writing it, recording it and performing it. But that's all been in Europe. With the current political crisis deepening I feel compelled to lend my voice to the growing chorus demanding change. While I have long considered myself a citizen of the world, I cannot deny that I am also a citizen of the country whose rulers are committing the most heinous crimes. I have a particular duty to resist the depredations inflicted upon humanity by the Bush Junta and those it represents. We, the common people of the US, need to make it clear that we are not represented by this government and that we oppose what it is doing. So, here I am, singing my songs to lend courage and determination to others who feel the same way and are acting upon their convictions.

I'll be bringing along with me an album called "A Wild Bouquet". This was recorded before I left San Francisco with some of the finest musicians I know. Since it was never properly released in the US the good people at Broken Arrow Records took the time and trouble to bring it out now. Of special note is one track, "So, What is Forever?", recorded in Switzerland with Yvonne singing with me. It bridges the gap between my solo work and what we're presenting on this tour. As a duet, Yvonne and I recently completed a new CD which won't become available until next year. However, as a special bonus, Broken Arrow is making available four songs from the upcoming album free with the purchase of "A Wild Bouquet". Of course, you're encouraged to visit our web sites and download to your heart's content.

What follows is the tour schedule. I'd be happy to see you at one of the shows. If you can't make it out, send me a mail to let me know you're still interested in receiving this newsletter.

Cheers, Mat

## Fall U.S. Dates

*Nov. 3 • Beacon, NY*  
Pete Seeger SongFest

*Nov. 4 • New York, NY*  
Brecht Forum See:  
<http://www.brechtforum.org/events/viewevent.php?recordID=785>  
Sat. Nov. 4th 7:00pm  
451 West Street (that's the West Side Highway)  
between Bank & Bethune Streets

*Nov. 5 • New York, NY*  
Sirius Radio 10:00 am  
Interview w/Dave Marsh  
Banjo Jim's 9:00 pm  
E. 9th St. & Ave. C on Manhattan's Lower East Side  
<http://www.banjojims.com>  
212-777-0869  
No Cover!

*Nov. 8 • Bronxville, NY*  
Sarah Lawrence College  
Lecture 12:45 pm

*Nov. 9 • Hartford, CT*  
With David Rovics  
Show time: 7:30PM  
Christ Church Cathedral  
45 Church Street  
Hartford, Connecticut 06103  
<http://www.cccathedral.org/events.html>

*Nov. 17 • San Francisco*  
Galeria de la Raza  
2857 24th Street, at Bryant  
415.826.8009  
[info@galeriadelaraza.org](mailto:info@galeriadelaraza.org)  
<http://www.galeriadelaraza.org>  
Why: A benefit for Freedom Archives and the Galeria de la Raza, featuring Mat Callahan & Yvonne Moore, with special guests  
Time: Reception at 7:00 pm, program starts at 8:00 pm  
Cost: \$8.00 suggested donation, but no one will be turned away



For further tour information contact:  
Thad Wharton  
Broken Arrow Records <<http://www.brokenarrowrecords.com/>>  
[info@brokenarrowrecords.com](mailto:info@brokenarrowrecords.com)

*What follows is a piece by regular contributor Thomas Powell, an artist and educator in Albuquerque, NM. His many years of art making—particularly large-scale public art—specially qualify Tom to address this important question. -MC*

## Why Do Human Beings Create Art?

If one were able to step outside of our solar system at a sufficient distance and with the proper viewing apparatus, one would view an astounding binary system comprised of an average sized star orbited by a living planet which is a veritable quasar of creative output. Our sun is a massive thermonuclear reactor which spews forth the full spectrum of radiation and accompanying solar winds beyond the boundaries of our solar system into the far reaches of outer space. In turn, the earth absorbs but a small fraction of this solar bounty, which is thence transformed into a vibrant and tenacious creative energy.

The creative energy of the earth is twofold. First, there is the robust biological vitality of the earth. Life has lived and continuously evolved on planet Earth for the past 4- $\frac{1}{4}$  billion years, clearly one-third of the duration of the universe's 13 billion year age! (The sun, itself, is only slightly older than earth life at 5 billion years.) The biosphere, that area of the earth in which living organisms flourish is a thin shell but a few miles thick which extends through the lower atmosphere, covers the Earth's land and water, and plunges to the thermal vents of the deepest ocean trenches. It corresponds to the hydrosphere of weather and sea for the great adventure of life as we know it requires a wet petri dish. Nevertheless, much of human society has always considered the entire earth to be a living deity, our sacred Mother Earth.

The second creative energy of earth is the mental extension of the human mind. The quantum leap from biology to higher intelligence is the next rung of cosmological evolution. It is not hubris to recognize that scrawny, fur-less human beings evolved during the last one hundred and fifty millennium to possess the extraordinary ability beyond any previous life form we are aware of to harness the force of creation to our own design. The human mind has grown collectively and exponentially to where it now readily plumbs from the minuscule of quanta, to the farthest reaches of space, and into the very depths of raw creation itself. The staggering extent of the collective human mind was recognized and named by the Jesuit philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who called this mental domain the "noosphere" from the Greek, *noo(s)* meaning mind. The noosphere, while it is a creation of the collective human mind, stands on its own as an encyclopedic compendium of knowledge about the universe. It is incomplete, of course, but it represents the enormous and growing body of articulated cosmic "self-knowledge".

So why do human beings create? That is a metaphysical question, as opposed to, "how did humans become so creative?" which is a science question. These two categories of knowledge, while they may inform each other, are nonetheless mutually exclusionary. Metaphysics is the realm of speculative thought. It embraces the search for ultimate meaning, the nature and purpose of existence, and the potentials and limitations of knowledge. Science, on the other hand, attempts to unravel the mechanics of such existence. Therefore, when I ask why humans create, my answers, while the result of my own research and experience, nevertheless will have a speculative quality. I have searched my soul for the reasons for why I as individual write and create visual art, and rightly or wrongly, I project these rationales onto the species in general.

There are four levels or rationales for which I create art. Each rationale is a complex inter-relationship of multiple factors, so this essay contains only the abridged highlights. 1) I create art because I am part of the divine project of universe-building; 2) I create art because I am part of what Henri Bergson called the "elan vital", the life force;

3) I create art because I am actively engaged with my community of family, friends, students, neighbors, citizens, and fellow artists; and 4) I create art for purely hedonistic reasons, I enjoy it.

Under the first rationale, I must categorically reject both radical materialism and absolutist atheism. To me, these belief structures attempt to stand as "Truth" outside of human psychology, culture, and experience, and thus outside of the noos-centric world view that I propose here. But saying that, I also categorically reject the patriarchal, omnipotent God of Judeo/Christian/Islam. This God is an anachronism, a purveyor of war, human suffering, and planetary degradation. This God is an obstacle to the continuity of human civilization. Throughout the duration of human history, God(s) have come and gone. God has always been both a necessity and an expediency. It is time to dump this arcane and costly God, and invent ourselves a new, healthy one.

The God proposed by the Protestant, feminist, theologian, Dorothee Soelle, is a step in the right direction, though "He" is still encumbered with a lot of Christian baggage. Soelle postulates that God created the universe out of loneliness. God, all-powerful and all-knowing, must similarly be all-feeling, and God all-alone across the eons, must have become so lonely (or so bored) that He needed something outside Himself—"the other". So God created the universe and all the creatures within it for companionship, and then God loved this creation.

Soelle's God simplifies the divine rationale for creation by offering an emotionally rewarding deity who is no longer in need of a pathetic Jesus alter-ego to humanize Him. By logical extension, if God needed anything outside of God's own being, then God must be fallible. An omniscient and omnipotent God might conceivably create a static, unchanging universe for some unfathomable divine reason, but a God who creates an other with the potential to grow and evolve abdicates the patriarchal cornerstones of all-power and all-knowledge. To grant autonomy to the other to grow, is to create the "I and Thou" relationship of love and respect which the rabbi Martin Buber spoke of. Thus, out of loneliness, a creator God renounces pleni-potent control over the nascent universe for what? For companionship, for love, for entertainment value, for education, for self-discovery—I like this God a lot better already.

The universe evolves and grows with the blessing of its divine consort. In this process, new things must always come into being, for the universe produces novelty to please God. Can we imagine God's menagerie? How about God's midden? As an artist, then, I justify my modest creative endeavors first on grounds that I am acting out a larger divine plan.

Since the first instant of divine creation/Big Bang, the universe has continuously grown in size, multiplied prolifically with unusual constituents, and connected it all with remarkable architecture and obscure pathways. We call this process of universe building very simply, "evolution". The universe has evolved. And it has evolved in a sequential process roughly correlating with the academic disciplines of physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology. Biology could not have preceded chemistry, nor could higher intelligence have evolved without a living platform.

The biological vitality of Earth was made possible by the bounty of the sun. It is a dynamic living environment with billions of kinds of organisms and untold numbers of each kind. All living organisms participate in the food chain which shackles us together in the common enterprise of "eat until eaten". From a stochastic point of view, it would seem likely that such a biological system would nominally reach stasis, some sort of uneventful routine or equilibrium, but that is hardly the case. Bad weather, natural disasters, invasive species, plagues, the 100 million year cataclysm, life on Earth is replete with random (or chaotic) punctuation marks. Therefore, each species of organism carries

within its genetic repertoire the potential to change its stripes, to evolve, to produce adaptive traits upon demand if it intends to continue eating.

The adaptive trait of our upstart and diminutive Cro-Magnon ancestors which allowed them to supersede their global, much larger, and highly successful Neanderthal cousins who possessed a comparable flint tool kit, was the facility for abstract, symbolic thought. In the human being, cosmological evolution made the jump at this remote locale from biology to higher intelligence. Our brains were hardwired for the creation of language, morality, music, religion, taxonomic ordering, and visual art, the incipient ingredients of mind. Thus, culture became our adaptive advantage. As a visual artist, I function as a cultural mutation. I am an agent of the evolutionary process.

There are a handful of great artists like Simon Rodia, the creator of the Watt's Towers, who labor away at their art for decades in isolation. The hermit savant is an important tradition. But the majority of serious artists, writers, musicians, actors and poets are highly trained and committed individuals who belong to a local community of similar artists, extended family, neighbors, supporters, fans, and friends. While creating the artwork may be a solitary, individual act, that process of creating begets displaying or performing which occurs within the context of the local venue. According to Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, art that arises from the people in this fashion unifies and builds community. This is true art; it is the resonant voice of the populace. By contrast, art which is manufactured for the salons and debaucheries of an elite is counterfeit art. Counterfeit art looks like art, it has the signifiers of art, it has the support of wealth and privilege, it promotes a class agenda, but it is fraudulent for it lacks the authenticity of arising from, or belonging to, or creating what Martin Luther King called the "beloved community", which is in fact, the shared communion of the audience.

I embrace this view, for I consider visual art to be a fundamental organizing principal of human culture. Much of what is promoted today as "contemporary art" for purposes of taste and consumerism lacks soul. It does not organize society; it fosters alienation and elitism. It promotes "stardom" at the expense of authenticity. There are untold laundry lists of good reasons given by artists for why they make art. Those that fall into the category of social reasons, including political commentary, I am convinced share the underlying subtext of a desire to build the beloved community. I make art to belong to, and to help mold the community in which I live.

My last category for creating art is personal reasons. Most artists can produce a laundry list of these rationale as well, but I think it is important to state that making art becomes psychologically addictive. As with long-distance running or constant prayer, the more you practice, the bigger a junkie you become. This is not aspersion; it is simple reality. One reason for this is that the process of art training is distinct from other subjects. Art training prepares one to selectively observe both the interior world of self and exterior world of other, to pursue syncretisms between these two, and to forever stand in awe of the natural world. The proximity of awe is compelling. It is not the lone purview of artists, but it is readily available.

The process of creating art is further compelling because it involves constant aesthetic decision-making. Each stroke of the brush, each daub of color, each chip of stone—a work of art entails thousands upon thousands of such small, focused, aesthetic decisions. In the process of creating, the artist loses track of time, ignores discomfort and physical pain, labors until exhaustion, or darkness, or prior commitment interrupts, and why? Because this process releases endorphins into the brain. Endorphins are the body's own opiates, there to stifle pain and to foster pleasure. The practice of prolonged aesthetic decision-making gets one high, and that state is psychologically addictive. The intoxication inherent to the creative process is the most compelling reason to make art for one can usually make a living elsewhere.

We might call this intoxication the "divine muse". For any artist to deny its central importance, is to be self-delusional.

As promised, I have omitted much in this brief tour. No doubt, there are additional valid rationales for human creativity. I have justified my own artistic productivity on the basis of divine presence, on the reality of evolution, on the needs of the human collective, and on individual self-absorption. I further suggest that my personal reasons are universal. And from there we have come full circle. These four levels of the creative experience are nested each within the others. The universe is the invention of a divine creator. The universe self-actualizes through the process of evolution. The human experiment represents the next great leap of this evolution process into higher intelligence and cosmological self-awareness. Human creativity is an adaptive mechanism of our species. Artistic expression both molds and reflects the local community. The artist is rewarded for creative production. The divine presence is a product of noos, our collective mind. It is a circular argument, but it does give us some rationale for why.

Thomas Powell

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## The Trouble With Music – Two Years On

In November, 2004 I finished my book. Though editing and a final chapter took another four months, the project that began in early 2002 was essentially complete. After two tours of the US and one brief swing through England and Scotland, now is a good time to be summing up. Besides, so many friends and acquaintances begin conversations by asking, "How's the book doing?" that I'd like to give a more substantive answer than, "Oh, it's fine".

To begin with, the issues addressed in the book are still hot topics. Regardless of what effect the book has had, they're more widely discussed than ever. Naturally, this includes copyright, file sharing and the current state of the music business. More significantly, though, is that many music makers and music lovers are seriously pondering how to deepen and reinvigorate the mutually reinforcing connections between us and the music we love in opposition to the dominant culture and its culture of dominance.\* While the endless parade of manufactured stars and the bombardment of public space by sonic garbage continues unabated, many, many people the world over are consciously rejecting it while seeking to create and support alternatives. This is inspiring to me both as an author who hopes his work will contribute to this struggle and as a musician who benefits from it.

Two recent examples say a lot about how the scam is unraveling:

*Universal Music, the world's largest music company, has shaken up the record industry by announcing that it will make its song catalogue available as free internet downloads.*

*"What is a little concerning is that for a long time now, the trade body, BPI, has been anxious to put across an anti-illegal or piracy message, which suggests that music is of intrinsic value and people should be prepared to pay for it, so this may give a conflicting, mixed signal."*

Gennaro Castaldo, spokesman for HMV  
(Independent UK By Arifa Akbar and Owen Walker,  
Published: 30 August 2006)

*Rolling Stone asked Dylan about music downloads from the internet and the complaints from the recording industry about people who do not pay for it. Dylan responds: "Well, why not? It ain't worth nothing anyway."*

(Modern music sound? It just ain't me, says 'curmudgeonly' Dylan  
By Andrew Buncome in Washington, Published: 23 August 2006)



So, the cat's out of the bag. All the hysteria about file sharing (including the RIAA's goon squads) lies in an embarrassed heap. Obviously, it was a ploy on the part of industry parasites fearing the loss of their privileged jobs. But more, it was a way to herd new generations of consumers into the digital realm where even more profits can be extracted from copyrights than ever before. Music and musicians were never threatened by file sharing. With the majors giving music away, let's hope some of those poor souls forced to pay in RIAA litigation will go get their money back! But, more importantly and more positively, what has happened is a massive exodus by musicians from the snares and delusions that have kept us in thrall to the Music Industry for decades. Every day I read and hear stories about artists breaking away, going directly to their audiences for support in a healthy exchange for mutual benefit. While I hesitate to call this a 'movement', in the political sense, it is nonetheless a mass phenomenon that is significantly altering the cultural landscape.

Here, I need to emphasize one thing: this is most definitely NOT about 'The Future of Music'. There are innumerable articles, web sites, panel discussions, and conferences devoted to this tedious subject. It's all a load of bollocks, to paraphrase the Sex Pistols. Music has no value\*\* and it has no future, either. It simply goes on being played by human beings because they love what music does. Of course, music has a history, or more precisely, music is a part of history but that's beside the point. 'Future of Music' debate is, in fact, not about music at all. It is about technology, capitalism and propaganda seen through the lens of people's careers in recording, promoting and distributing commodities. This does not really concern music or musicians and the less time one loses engaging in this trivial pursuit the more time one has to practice, listen to or perform music.

On another front, my book brought me into contact with Pete Seeger and his campaign for Public Domain reform. This in turn led me to the UN and the formation of the NGO, Music In Common. The proposal put forward there is available on my web site so I won't reprint it here. But suffice it to say, this is an ongoing effort to protect music that is the legacy of a community, composed by no individual or by an individual within a tradition, which is exchanged as part of the ongoing life of a people, not as a commodity. Since this comprises most of the music in the world, there is literally no end to the inspiration that can be drawn from it, nor is there an end to the controversy surrounding it. The forces attempting to privatize everything in the cosmos are met by the great majority of humankind who bear witness to the public disaster this privatization means. Music in Common is an instrument with a modest aim: First, to establish a system by which music, musicians and the communities from which they spring share in whatever material benefits that might accrue to their collective creation. Second, to provide a mechanism by which a community can forbid and effectively prevent the misappropriation of its creativity (art, dance, music, etc.). But Music in Common is also part of a larger struggle. On one side of the great hall where these meetings are held are gathered States, Pharmaceutical Companies and giant financial institutions. They shout: "Productivity!" On the other side are a dizzying array of States, indigenous, environmental and revolutionary groups. They shout: "Justice!" What is at stake is the world. Do we want peace? Do we want good food, clean air and water? Do we want to enjoy health and happiness? We're not going to get it from the Privatizers. We're going to get it by joining together as members of the human community and fighting to expand and enrich the Public Sphere-what we belong to and what belongs to us.

I will be attending the next meeting in Geneva November 30. I will have more to report on that in the next newsletter.

Now you may still be asking, "That's very interesting but what about the book?" To this I can only say that the book is still selling, it is being used by a number of professors in courses ranging from ethnomusicology to mass communications. It has generated provocative dis-

cussions in a wide range of venues, terrestrial and electronic,\*\*\* and it will continue to for some time to come. But quantifying the effects are difficult and of questionable value to me. Of course, one always seeks to have one's views propagate. A larger audience is preferable to a smaller one, in this sense. But I find this overly simplistic as it fails to explain the manner in which ideas take root in society and bring about actual change. To begin with, restless motion, nervous spasms are not change. The constant, bombastic sales-pitch to which we are subjected is not change. "Revolutionary! New! Innovative!", are only the current guise of an oppressive hierarchy that is very old. When people stopped believing in the Divine Right of Kings, and overthrew them-that was a change. When people stopped thinking slavery was acceptable, and brought it to an end-that was a change. When Women's Liberation and Environmentalism started to alter the way people lead their lives, a change began that is still in process. When we eventually stop believing in capitalism and replace it with something better-that will be a big change. But to achieve the goal of freeing ourselves from old ways of thinking that reinforce oppressive social relations we must trust persuasion over coercion. While in certain situations it is necessary to physically restrain a predator (as all revolutions have had to do) that cannot be the purpose or aim. Coercion-force and fraud-are used on us every day. We cannot resort to them if we want to eliminate them. My book sought to add insight and attitude to the debate roiling in society with the confidence that, together, we will sort through these ideas and choose those most useful. By applying George Clinton's maxim, "Free your mind and your ass will follow!" I make an appeal to my fellow humans to join in an effort to liberate ourselves. It is by these criteria that the project's success or failure should be determined.

I will be happy if I provided some tools useful to music makers in strengthening their resolve and improving their craft. I will be happy if music lovers were given convincing evidence supporting their intuition that something is terribly wrong, that it's not just a matter of 'taste'; there is such a thing as anti-music and it is being manufactured to drown out the real music we need to live. I share Albert Ayler's view that music is the healing force of the universe. This is not a mystification. We can hear and feel what music does because music is, at root, a collective activity. Thus, unless we surrender it, music can never be taken from us.

Thanks for reading, thanks for listening. Let's continue this conversation.

#### NOTES:

\* this roundtable discussion is a good example  
(<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,,1923704,00.html>)

\*\* By this I mean the definition of value given by Adam Smith which is based on equivalence in exchange. This apple is worth this orange or each is worth 50 cents, etc. Following from this is Smith's famous distinction between productive and unproductive labor: "The labour of some of the most respectable orders in the society is, like that of menial servants, unproductive of any value... The sovereign, for example, with all the officers both of justice and war who serve under him, the whole army and navy, are unproductive labourers. They are the servants of the public, and are maintained by a part of the annual produce of the industry of other people... In the same class must be ranked... churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds; players, buffoons, musicians, opera-singers, opera-dancers, etc." (l.c., pp. 94-95). Adam Smith, *The Wealth Of Nations* For further information-read my book!

\*\*\* Date: 2006-10-11 09:07:28  
marvin kee aka 'the fly' (marvin\_kee@hotmail.com/http://www.myspace.com/flytrap-band) wrote:  
*hi mat. i just want to thank u for a wonderful book. it has saved my life. it's nice to have someone write down what i have been thinking and been depressed about as a musician the past decade. i know now, that i'm not crazy, or negative as people claimed me to be. u are right in every way in your book. as a starving artist myself, trying to penetrate this 'deaf' music industry, have been trying to get financing for my project 'Flytrap'. no one in the industry will listen or understand what i'm trying to do and i had been getting no where fast, fading out on drugs and alcohol for years juss to numb my brain from the harsh reality of living in a world where shit music was being shoved down my throat for so long. all i could do is ask myself everyday... 'Who stole the soul?' i don't even think Quincy Jones could qualify for a grant these days unless he was writing music for the Back Street Boys. times have changed and it has been difficult to adapt. i have persisted and persevered for a long time. but all thanks to your book, i have had my second wind and i refuse to quit... for music's sake. even if i have to go against the grain against music industry standards, with 2 bucks in my pocket. i will not quit. so thank u so much!!  
hopefully your book will 'awaken' the world, clear out the ear wax and trigger some change.*  
the fly