

Monday 5 Jewlye 1993
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Greetings ++++

Got to see the fireworks from a hill last night. Missed them two years in succession. No way to get to any viewpoint at night..

Fireworks are a pattern in time and that is the relevance to music. The programming that has to be done to make something happen in sequence instead of out of order or too much at once, built into the affair.

Finally. The other power cord for the Atari keyboard, so that I can see what is on those disks. Couldn't start looking at it till yesterday.

Also: eight years in San Diego as of next week. All that time no turntable to play the collection of 78 rpm records. The pickup was smashed in moving from Glendale. The other turntable only had 33 and 45. Principal regret was that I have 78 of Vyshnegradski, 4 pianos in quartertone; Haba, one special quartertone piano. No way to copy them. Couldn't make good cz cassette copies in Glendale for several reasons. Now I can and so I did.

Several years ago someone brought me an album (78 from the 40's) with three disks (should have been 4, but no matter in this case) somebody playing a Hammond Novachord. Trivial music but it is very important that other people get to hear Novachord timbres so that this vacuum-tube monster (nearly 150 tubes in it) be compared with present synthesizers and samplers.

8 yearz unable to hear the records. About three months ago I found a turntable with four speeds and something like the one I had. The pickup was good but the motor burnt out, so hopeless. Two weeks ago going through a nearby alley, a turntable similar to the wone damaged enroute to San Diego, but this one crisp and clean and having all its connecting wires, and thrown out upside-down in a flimsy box. Up for grabs. So I finally hooked it up yesterday and it works perfectly and isn't even dusty.

A better model than the one I had 20 years ago.

Now some of the records 33, 45, and 78 in the black cabinet can be copied and then wrapped up and stored in a closet leaving room for computer stuff to be in the cabinet under the computer.

Only the records likely to be played occasionally need be in that cabinet anymore.

Also there is a bunch of Sound-Sheets--flexible small records that were in this or that magazine such as CMJ.

I hadn't heard them either.

Glasiers moving into their smaller house a block away--lots of painting of BOTH houses and answering calls left on the answering machine. Then where do they put all the stuff that can't go into their smaller house? Ouch.

Best part of yesterday morning was finding out that I don't need to keep those two horrid turntables that have been cluttering the garage (hoping for many months that I could put one's pickup into the other one by juryrigging the mountings) and I put them both into an old box which probably can be thrown out in the rubbish soon. Two power cords to save and not much else.

They took up so much room in the garage and all the people who scolded me because I had hoped to find time to fix them and never could.

The Theremin has been out of action nearly a year, covered with boxes and

boxes and finally those are put away outside and it turned out not to be damaged after all and I was able to show it to somebody last week. Important to have it and its amplifier and speaker out in the garage when repairing something.

And of course to take somewhere if I get any lecture/recitals. Will I live long enough to have those opportunities? I can get to appear anywhere except San Diego.

Back to the Novachord. I have both the patent that covered what they actually put in production and that for a more elaborate version that would have had 88 note keyboard instead of the 72 keys, and would have had what is now called "velocity" and be touch-responsive as to dynamics--probably not the same scheme as is now on the Velocity keyboards, of course, since it was designed about 1937. But it would have worked.

There is something missing from the Novachord sound. Back in 1939 and 1940, when I had three chances to attend demonstrations and to play one, and then later about 1965 when I had chances to visit the late Paul Bea Beaver's studio and see two Novachords which he had slightly improved with new gadgets, I heard comments by others about something lacking in their tone.

This is one of the reasons I was anxious to have specimens of Novachord recordings--to be able to discuss with other people now what the matter was. I think it came under that Nebulous Concept sometimes referred to in the Literature as Design Philosophy.

The tremendous financial success of the gearwheel Hammond Organ, for 35 years or so, may have given them overconfidence. The Roland and Korg and a few other modern keyboards have something that the Novachord just doesn't have. I suspect it's the Hammond Company's Attitude back in the 30s and 40s such that they didn't get the right people to help design or to refine the design. Or if the right persons were working for the company at that time (the Novachord was put on the market in 1939) they were not allowed to exercise their talents, to make the Novachord better. It's very subtle. One fellow said to me, "The Novachord has a sort of nyaa nyaa that irritates you soon and then you can't STAND it!"

I think he was almost right. The top brass in that factory didn't care. Or they had so much contempt for the public and for musicians that they didn't bother that last ounce of improvement. The Roland JX-3P and some other things DID care and don't have that particular kind of whining defect.

They may have other faults, but not that particular one which was a failure to really complete the basic design.

In the 1930's through the 1980's, nobody would EVER listen to me on such matters. Only very recently has the attitude toward me changed for the better. Almost too late.

In the 30's and the 40's, I met Primadonna Inventors and Overly Smug people in the musical instrument field. They had contempt for me. But something magic happened in 1993. I guess I had to wait for some people to get born and grow up.

There was a radio program interview the other day of a fellow who claims to be a marketing consultant. He gave some figures--I wonder how to check them:

He claimed that those pushy invention development companies that offer to contact companies to market ideas, have scammed about a hundred million from inventors recently.

He says they want from \$400 to \$30,000 and the average demand is for \$5,000. I can believe it; while still in Glendale two of those companies badgered and pestered me a number of times each.

My name was given them by well-meaning acquaintances.

He claimed that, if I heard correctly while scrubbing the pans and dishes, that only 5% of what was patented ever got produced.

that of the gadgets actually on the market now, only 1% are really patented;

that there is NO correlation between successfully patenting something and successfully marketing something.

ie., patenting and marketing are quite irrelevant to each other.

And there is no real protection.

I figured that one out back in Dear Old 1938.

Therefore I didn't try to borrow money or harass possible promoters for patenting my amplifying clavichord or some kind of electronic organ or certain other ie ideas I had since 1938.

So while I had dozens of enemies, I didn't have people hounding me for debts owed to them!

I went through all those years when the Hammond Organ was monopolizing the market and stifling creativity and competition in the electronic music field, sad and grieving because there was no hope, but today I have the Ultimate Revenge--they don't make them anymore and the three keyboards here all have almost perfect imitations of the Hammond gearwheel organ and they designed themselves into a situation where no further improvement was possible and no remedy for certain of the Hammond organ's faults but starting over completely from Scratch.

I met Melvin L. Severy in 1939 who was one of the inventors who was badly croggled by inventing something very close to the Hammond organ but had no financial success at all with his design and wasted away grieving. He's not the only one defeated.

Valuable if bitter lesson. I didn't do certain things since 1939 that would have ruined me and caused permanent despair. However, there is a positive side: The ubiquitous Hammond organ sound re-conditioned the Public Ear and broke much of the Piano Monopoly, preparing the way, when Hammond organs finally were superseded, for all kinds of electronic instruments which are now current.

Hammond had the Chord Organ (in at least three versions) and the Solovox --these were all vacuum-tube-oscillator deals and used Novachord design principles. They didn't really succeed on the market even though there was all that successful marketing of the Gearwheel Organ and the terrific impact of the advertising agencies that put that organ on the Map for so very long.

The other revenge I have had, of course, is thirteen months plus of exposure of the Visual Art Aspect of the Megalyra Instruments after Wilbur and Rob Bell said that those instruments were UNFINISHED and did not deserve to BE SEEN. And quite a number of visitors 1992 and 1993 here who believe those instruments to be satisfactory.

BECAUSE of how they look. So "improving" their appearance would have kept me OUT of the Museum and Off the lecture/recitals. More photographers have been here to take pictures of them lately. That is what my mother taught me about color and form as a boy was valid. If she hadn't been so ill, she could have been an important art teacher.

Finally got to the Gypsy Stationery store and 100 filing folders when I had completely run out. Now I can have those xeroxes you sent me, accessible instead of one big indigestible and unferrable-to pile in boxes. They will be in the bins and elsewhere always available. So now I have to get more people who can take me shopping. Jonathan will be off to very very distant places.

Two more people in San Diego will have moved to L A or farther away. So I have to "replace" them.

A fancy electric guitar has been brought here to be nineteenfied. Can't get at it for a while of course. Too many boxes to move and too many things to re-order and repair.