

Worse yet, the Pianolatry Religion--the way conventional musicians and teachers worship the piano and even in this age of synthesizers and computers are fighting a most desperate rear-guard retreat action, while the same economic forces that held the piano and other conventional instruments in place and prevented new instruments coming on the market when I was a boy or a teenager, are now making the piano so horribly outrageously expensive and the electronic keyboards so cheap you can get one at a shopping mall or a drugstore in many case.

The crossover in price occurred somewhere in the Sixties or early Seventies. But too many of today's instruments are still haunted by the Piano's Ghost and the 12-tone temperament.

Probably a good idea for you to start with random notes in whatever the computer can sound out for you--break the 12-tone stranglehold at least.

I have been writing a long list of publications for some 40 years and practically everything can be xeroxed when and as needed. I thus haven't lost the things that were so far Ahead Of Their Time--when I was 20 or 30 that's what everybody said and I had oodles of enemies--now I have outlived them at age 72. But it was almost too long a wait and I didn't expect to live this long, let alone have better health now than I did at 18 or 48.

The way I got started in refretting that you were writing about, was that Erv Wilson in Los Angeles, back in 1961, was having a local guitar shop refret and he sent me there and they sold me fret-wire and didn't want to do non-12 fretting so were glad to have me do it myself. In Feb. 1978 my article on non-12 guitars was published in Guitar Player magazine and brought me visitors as well as phone calls and letters.

The Interval Foundation in San Diego has published a magazine called INTERVAL--new issue may be out by Jan 90, and most back issues still available. I am on the Board and we have some recitals and demos at a downtown Sonic Arts Gallery. Say about twice a month. Mitch Corber of New York City was here recently to interview and videotape us for his Cable TV affair in Manhattan.

My recording collection now has 231 reels and 266 cassettes, and much of that is non-12. I'll send you a list and some other leaflets and things soon. I produced eleven Xenharmonic Bulletins as you evidently know already. Tables and comparisons of scales and so on. Monographs on various musical and nonmusical subjects. Now that I have more instruments, and recording machines, and one of those cassette double-speed duplicators, I can concentrate on SOUNDS and make up for the terrible stasis and retardation of musical progress in comparison with all other arts and sciences. I can improvise; I can overdub; thus I will never have to beg somebody to perform from my sheet music. I don't have to pine away in anguished futility because I can't get rehearsals of my compositions, whether the radical new ones I do now or the conservative stuff I turned out at age 16 or 26.

One very important thing right now is that with tape machines you don't need to invent non-12 notations. Who would perform the scores anyhow? My quartertone violin pieces that Johnny Reinhard had performed at his concert waited almost FIFTY YEARS. He was the first person willing to perform them! They have never been publicly performed here in California. Never in all the long long time since 1935 through 1938 when they were composed.

Only on tape when I played them on the cello and recorded them. That was in the 1960s. In the 1940s I sent out many copies of those pieces but that did not result in any performances. What I think of orchestra conductors and concert promoters is not printable and probably would not be legal in the US Mail.

So don't let killjoys and pessimists tell you to be patient--you have recording and can send tapes directly to listeners without any middlemen and get feedback. Many theorists seem to think they or we must wait for new keyboards--my experience has been that the problems of playing new scales on regular keyboards (new scale mapped onto a regular synthesizer for example) are pseudo-problems--I can play 31 on a regular keyboard so don't have to wait for something I may never see. It is not so difficult as certain pessimistic writers and theorists will try to tell you. A friend of mine in San Diego is using a sequencer so even a c scale like 41 or 53 offers no additional troubles.

Your s

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Greetings from Out West ***

At the moment, grinding out copy-cassettes after saving up to buy a box of 100 at an import place near here (most of them from Hongkong; wonder whether they will be doing that well in 1997 when Hongkong reverts to Mainland China?)

I was able to get the loan of several keyboards from distant places--northern California, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and indeed there now is a considerable informal network of people spanning the country which is now known as the Xenharmonic Music Alliance--it started, nebulous and nameless, back about 1962 and rather limited for a while, but the last seven years really has grown. No meetings no dues no formalities no officials either. If you make new sounds in new scales on non-twelve-tone instruments you are a member.

Before going on, since you have all those refretted guitars, you might correspond with

BUZZ KIMBALL, Route 1, Box 312, Contoocook NH 03229.

He came out here to Glendale where I was then living (suburb of Los Angeles with stinging SMOG and uptight so-called "conservative" people) a couple of times and then copied some of my instruments of the Megalyra group--he took one of my Hobnailed Newel Posts home with him.

He sent me two Farfisa electronic organs a while back--with 24 notes/octave on 2 keyboards I can retune them to equal or unequal temperaments or Pythagorean or just arrays. He is putting out computer tables and a few tapes and recently when he found out I was able to borrow an Ensoniq Mirage, he sent microtonal disks for it that he made up on his computer--that permits forcing the sound disks into 17 or 34 or 31 or 15 and a number of other scales.

Richard Koerner in Connecticut sent me a Korg Poly-Six which had been modified by Rayna to take it out of twelve and it will do equal temperaments all the way up to 57. It does extremely well in 31 or even 41. Just turn a knob. So with two very different keyboards, synthesizer and sampler, I get contrast or solo and accompaniment in a variety of scales and among my recent recordings in 13-thru-19 on a cassette, TEEN TUNES ONE and TEEN TUNES TWO. I am doing and have done quite a number of comparisons.

The time has come for practice instead of the silent paper-and-ink theory that too many people are involved in these days.

From your letter I gather that you are wondering how to proceed from the situation you have reached: which end of the intricate skein or mesh to pick up first? I usually say, try 19 to start, to break out of 12, unless your personality doesn't jibe with the mood of 19--in that case start with 22. After those, explore 31 and 17, then go on to the various others.

A few people are so indoctrinated in 12 that they must start with 24, but it's obvious this is not your problem at all.

It is, I admit, bewildering at the outset. So many choices possible, and too many mean cruel nasty reactionary spoilsports and hecklers and sourpussed Enemies of Musical Progress.