

Wensdi 9 September 1981
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Greetings =====

Yesterday was very trying----severe overheating spell like I used to have 25 years ago. Took hours to cool off. These spells used to happen almost every day and last only about an hour or less. Yesars since I had to put up with it.

Richard Sibley came here Monday and brought me a couple of issues of that International Musician and Recording World (I believe it is a British-sponsored magazine since there are some articles from there and they also have a Canadian section.)

They had in the various ads, quite a number of addresses of music manufacturers and distributors in Los Angeles County and some that were various places in Orange County. There are custom pickup makers in Southern California and other places that modify or make attachments for instruments.

The 24-tone guitar is now playable. It will now be possible to go back and forth from 24 to 22 with the other guitar and have instant comparison in the manner of the hi-fi people's or the recording studios' "A - B" switching back and forth to show the difference in mood. Quartertones are definitely harsher than what 22 has to offer. And two guitars don't give the listener time to forget.

Cramped my hands doing all that filing-down. I was of course afraid I would accidentally file one of the already-too-low original frets--that was the main anxiety on this conversion.

It will be possible to try 25-tone.

Letter from Gary Morrison's mother, telling of further experiments. She restored a defunct cello so, it is now playable. Gary is back at W 834 Jester Center Halls in Austin TX (dormitory for the University I guess) and there is an arrangement where he has temporary jobs part of the year---he just went bback to the university. (As you can see, this typewriter stutters.)

Now

Buzz Kimball sent me \$5 to get stuff for the roaches, so I guess the situation left an impression on him! Last night they were all over the kitchen floor. They laugh at me. None of the poisons seems to do anything. Pretty soon they will learn how to eat metal.

As I understand it, Thomas Reed's procedure with M-6-6-N is very tedious--not as efficient as yours in running Interval. The articles are revised and the revision sent back to the author, then the Esperanto translator gets it and that in turn is revised, to take months of course--although in my case where I will be writing the Esperanto version later, it will just get revised by the Esperanto translator which should save a month or so. That explains why the Newsletter is semi-annual.

I went over past issues to get some idea of style and length before writing my thing and then xeroxing it before I sent him the original. So now you have a xerox almost as good as the original--I had to write on it so you would know it was indeed just a copy!

I have to wonder: Are the fancy drums and cymbals in those ads in the music magazines really worth all that? When the neighbor kids can drum so well on the garbage cans?

I forgot to show you the arrangement I tried to connect up for the preamplifier and ~~hiketo~~ to get sounds into the frequency counter. It gave lots of false counts because of hum and noise in it, so was useless. When the counter read "80" I knew what was happening of course--it was counting the powerline hum. I have a different mike and different kind of preamplifier to try out but only some of the wires are hooked up yet.

However: when I fix the organ and come to tune it, I can make a direct connection and won't need a preamplifier or mike. It will then be possible to tune the organ from one system to another much faster than when it had to be done by ear.

What I meant just above was that the powerline frequency was added to the frequency of the sound being measured giving a false count. Also noise of any kind causes a count for each pulse.

So there is little danger of piano tuners being replaced by machines since you have to know a good deal about electronics to interpret the readings of the tuning device.

And there we have it exactly right on the button! When Joel Mandelbaum wanted to have two pianos in 19 (between them) he had to get a tuner to use a Conn Stroboscope (which of course was available at Indiana University because Elkhart Indiana was where they invented the thing!) and tune the center octaves of each piano I think you remember the scheme---piano I has the sharps and the naturals; piano II has the sharps the same as Piano I but the natural keys have the seven FLATS. Then they (Mandelbaum and his tuner evidently) tuned the other octaves from that. Must have been intolerably tedious, and you know from the tape that he only used the center octaves of the pianos--he didn't go to very high notes.

There is only the 12-tone tuning routine, in two main versions: the one I use is by beats of the fourths and fifths and the thirds and sixths are only used for checking. The other principal routine tunes the thirds and sixths and checks with the fourths and fifths. There was no 19-by-ear routine until I invented it.

There have been meantone routines, much as shown in Jorgenson's pamphlet, but with no electronic devices and no set of forks and no outside means of checking the results, I believe most meantone-style tuning was by guess and by gosh and instead of that neat array of tuning procedures shown in Jorgenson's pamphlet, all the possible intermediate systems or lack of system were used.

Which gets me to where I was heading today: There is an article in the International Musician and Recording World magazine about the Kustom 88 electronic imitation-piano which is one of the new portables. Evidently it is all-electronic being a sort of electronic organ which is restricted to piano and harpsichord effects. Apparently the designing partly done by Baldwin Piano Co. or they merely sponsor or control the Kustom Co. which they evidently bought-out. Now this is NOT the same thing as the Baldwin Concert Grand Electronic that I wrote about--nothing like it inside--and this is NOT anything to do with the Wurlitzer and Fender-Rhodes imitation pianos which have actual metal reeds or springs that are really struck by actions.

There are also imitation pianos that aren't quite that imitation---- they do have strings. Unfortunately all these articles and ads deliberately mislead and confuse. The article in this magazine is much more honest than most such. It admits that it is without strings or springs or reeds and uses oscillators. No ad directed to musicians would do this--a shocking amount of disrespect from the manufacturers on of instruments.

q The public be damned seems to be the manufacturers' attitude, and in my case I have suffered disrespect and being kept from my legitimate right to work for all those years and years.

That is, How dare any composer have the right to dictate what kind of instruments shall be used? and no composer has the right to tell the performer how to perform. This was reflected in DJohn Diamond's condemnation of any feedback---I forget whether you were still in that room when he said to that to the group after I told him that he had not used the word Feedback at all, and was he using only DEAD composers? and he as much as said precisely so.

The article by the staff writer of the magazine on the Kustom 88 started off with the Cristofori legend. That is, this thing was a breakthru in improving on the piano but yet it wasn't a real piano. So talking out of both sides of their mouth or playing both sides of the street, as you will!

Why won't ANYBODY admit that real pianos are now too expensive? Why pretend that the serious student has to borrow money in order to get a piano good enough to practice on? and then probably have no place to put it? Evidently Thomas Reed is still back there in the 19th century teaching piano tuning and writing for the Piano Technician and other such magazines as if it were still 1881.

These people subscribing to his journal are inventing 19th century artifacts--ignoring all electronic instruments and ignoring even pipe-organs which have more right to the keyboard than the piano does since they came first. Somewhere down the line the organbuilders lost their basic right to control the design of the keyboard and surrendered it to the piano MANUFACTURERS--not the composers, not the pianists, not the piano-teachers, not the orchestras that play piano concerti--all if for the convenience of action-factories, not for the performers and actually against composers progressing beyond about where Schumann was.

So I don't expect any concrete results whatsoever from the readers of M-6-6-N since any ideas they have about non-12 are thwarted in their birth-process by the limitations of those felt-covered hammers and dampers and springs and wooden /m machinery.

I say this after having read a whole bunch of back issues of M-6-6-N than that Chalmers sent me during the Cromleigh affair. These are the inventions that should have been made just a century AGO. Just before Debussy was in school. So he could have written for whole-tone-scale keyboards.

There is a built-in paradox: the M-6-6-N authors DO NOT WANT 12-tone Serialism, nor whole-tone-based so compositions! They only want major-&-minor key-signature music approximately 1800-1870. They do not want atonality for which their new keyboards and notations are actually suited! Very peculiar. Fighting themselves. So now that I wrote the article I can go back to guitars and amplifiers and electronic instruments.

Yours