

Thursday 17 September 1981

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Greetings from Roach & Ant Farms----

I spent the \$5 from Buzz Kimball on bug stuff as requested and they just laugh at me and taunt me in the morning -- even the hot water in the sink doesn't drown them anymore. More ants than ever before. 95° forecast today. The phone rang frequently yesterday -- nothing but wrong numbers and soliciting for the newspapers, until you called.

That is to say, certain things I was beginning to get in past months, have fizzled this month--no transportation and I have not been taken to the Brand Library and no way of getting materials and no rides to the market and about 6 possible opportunities evaporated into nothing, leaving me with nothing but my mailbox and currently, Reed in MO and Chalmers in TX. Hartzler stopped writing about two months ago. Kimball writes more than before. But where is Jeannie Pool? and what happened to all these people that were supposed to be sent here? and John Gibbon never called me in a long time.

With Synex dead, no further hope that anybody on that mailing list will come here and get involved on synthesizers. Never heard again from Boydstun in Glendale and he is unlisted. I have a card with the number someplace and can't find it. This produces a mental atmosphere of loneliness and then instead of anybody new picking up my Telepathic Commercials, pests like Krumholz, Kneifel and now this Abbie Breit take the messages as invitations or even license to bother me out of my mind!

Now, the postponement to 6 October means that the repair of the instruments may be long delayed from rainstorms. Also the strings will rust no matter whether the instruments are kept in the garage or wrapped up in plastic. So there can be no planning for the repair and then return of the instruments, since rain could ruin any possible plans or schedules.

I am faced with a whole month during which I have no promise of any new visitors or places to be taken to, so at the best possible time of all this year, which is right now, I am all ready to demonstrate many instruments and nobody to hear them or try them, and thus the danger of going down unknown back into obscurity.

I have had to put about 2 weeks just into this article for M-6-6-N and have to rewrite some of it as you will see from the xeroxes I sent yesterday, and this will drag on the rest of this year when the Esperanto version has to go through all this same thing over again. And it does not have anywhere as much effective readership --i.e. any hope that someone in Los Angeles or even California will read the article and visit as a result--as Interval does. Indeed, I wouldn't bother at all, only that I have to prove to Cromleigh that I have done something during the past 50 years.

Now I have to decide whether to clean the Varityper so I can get out some more leaflets--it is slow as molasses and it makes a mistake in almost every line. The typewriter man has not called

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so this could drag on for months. It took almost a year to get the Selectric in the first place. The repair shops here would charge more to fix it than I paid for the whole machine.

It is now 17 September and the checks are not cashed yet. Longest wait I have ever had. No matter where I move this will be a tremendous problem. There was a discussion on the radio yesterday about the burdensome identification requirements now for cashing checks such that even a traveler's check requires two credit cards or something to cash it. Maybe if I move to some place with a younger landlord they would take care of it.

That is another reason I am making this terrible fuss about business partners. I don't see any other way to have a firm arrangement for transportation (which including transporting other persons TO my studio to see the instruments or transact business or take composition lessons or help to get me involved with research and development on synthesizers etc.) except a quid-pro-quo agreement with a business partner. If you have any ideas, let's hear now. A year from now either I won't be here at all or I will have succeeded and not need it.

Certain other things, like the Numaude affair, do not involve hauling me around or bringing people to me or bringing materials to me. The promoter or agent in charge of the Numaude System doesn't have to live in Los Angeles or even California and it wouldn't matter how often or far I had to move, since I would no longer be directly involved. Someone else would make the master tapes and write the teaching materials and I would never have to handle or store them. Once I found a promoter and taught them the syllables and gave them the charts and a copy each of the propaganda, I could more or less forget about it.

But to demonstrate the Megalyra and show what it can do and what potentialities and abilities I designed into it and WHY, I must be seen by the customers and potential salespersons and business partners and the music studios or stores or customizing (in this case, copying) shops that would sell or lease it. To get involved with synthesizers profitably as a consultant or once-a-week or once-a-month collaborator on new designs for synthesizers, I have to be face-to-face with people already in that business, not just dreamers or professional procrastinators or dilettanti or more pests telling me I was born a century ahead of my time and to wait for the next reincarnation.

The articles on people going over to regular acoustic double-bass indicate that somebody is getting tired of the electric-bass dullness, thuddiness. Another important point, I forgot to mention last night, is: So far I have had three opportunities to be taken to places that had amplifiers and effect-boxes through which to demonstrate the Megalyra--one was a temporary set up when the Doobie Bros. were rehearsing in Hollywood about two years ago (since then of course they are all or nearly all, different people!) and the others were a couple of medium-size music-stores which had amplifiers and effect-boxes. That was or rather they were, about a year ago. Now the automatic assumption was that a bass instrument should go through a bass amplifier and that meant, an amplifier designed for the conventional, too-short, dull thuddy electric bass. Not an amplifier designed for a big electronic organ. Not a hi-fi amplifier designed for all kinds of orchestra records. Not the kinds of amplifiers that I have built or have acquired here and that I play my instruments through. So these demos have not been quite right!

Your Fender Bassman is an intermediate case, since it has what they call a NORMAL channel, which presumably means for regular electric guitars or whatever.

Now: most of these instrument amplifiers have what is called harmonic distortion. If you play just one note at a time on an electric bass, it doesn't have enough harmonics because the strings are too loose for the deep tones and because they are made to be dull--so they won't "ring" as a harpsichord or piano string does for that same note. The "ringing" I am talking about is mostly high harmonics and some high-pitched inharmonic partials from longitudinal and torsional vibrations. The orthodox string bass has high-pitched noise when bowed, not pizz. of course, and the G and D strings usually have high harmonics especially when bowed. The heavy windings on the E and A strings damp out high harmonics.

So, if a dull string is played through an amplifier with harmonic distortion that produces a few mid-range harmonics that weren't there. The amplifier is said to be non-linear--that is, when the a.c. signal voltage goes up or down beyond a certain point the amplified voltage is no longer a replica of it but is distorted--too little for the higher voltages and perhaps normal for the lower voltages during the waveform cycle. This means harmonics are generated, and usually they are lower-order. 2nd through 5th probably.

Now the Megalyra long strings naturally have harmonics as high as the 20th already there. Distorting won't help--it fuzzes it up, whereas distorting the dull electric bass strings will brighten them up to a point--beyond that point, fuzz and mush result as you know only too well. I notice you don't collect electric basses.

So the Megalyra needs a "flat" low-distortion amplifier because the brilliance as well as depth are already designed into it. That's what it's all about! Why would I bother, otherwise?

I am not against dull tones in their place. So I put on dull-tone sets of pickups at the proper point along the strings to get this. It serves the same purpose as the soft-pedal on a piano or the mute on a violin or the wide-bore tuba in the orchestra and band. The other pickups provide the sizzle and sting.

A pipe organ has wide-bore stopped pipes for dull bass tones and reed pipes for zing and zip. Unfortunately the double bass and cello tones require narrow-bore metal pipes up to 16 feet long and they cost so much that only the biggest auditoriums and the wealthiest churches ever have them. One octave of string-tone pipes for the pedals in the contra-octave could cost thousands. Look up the price of pure tin on the metal market these days!

Now is the right and only time for me to warn you and everybody else that if the Megalyra is only played through dull amplifiers it will never get anywhere. In recording studios it should be patched directly into the mixer for the recording equipment, not played through an amplifier in the room. This was done at the studio that did Glen's record which is why it succeeded on that portion. The through-an-amplifier situation was tried out and the engineer said Nope and he was right. Be guided accordingly. Remember: we are making our first impressions on new people who could be our sponsors or meal-tickets.

Yours