

MOOG-TASTIC!

1

A few thoughts about this collection of songs... by Dana Countryman
(Liner notes edited by Darlene Lacey)

"Moog-Tastic!" has been an eight-year project. I actually started working on this album back in 2002. That was also the same year that I had purchased my modular synthesizer from synthesizers.com, a Texas company who'd begun producing a close replica of the classic Moog modular synthesizers, using modern technology.

Like the original Moog synthesizer, this replica analog synthesizer is monophonic. This means that it is incapable of making more than one sound at a time. It is also quite expensive and complicated to use. However, this modular system is so versatile that it's possible to come up with amazing sounds and musical voices that you just can't get from other (easier to use and more affordable) modern digital synthesizers or samplers.



My studio in 2004



It had been a thirty-year dream of mine to own a modular Moog. In 2002, when I became serious about pursuing that dream, I realized that buying an antique Moog was actually not that great of an idea. The few original (modular) Moogs that came up for sale (usually on eBay) had become way overpriced, and most of those were falling apart, due to their old age.

This new, modern re-creation of the classic synth had many improvements over the old one: it was less expensive than an antique Moog, it was less likely to fail, and it was designed specifically to create a very, very close copy of the original Moog sound.

I already owned an Ondioline, (a very rare French vacuum-tube synthesizer that predates the original Moog.) I also owned a

liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

2

Korg MS-2000, a newer polyphonic synthesizer that allows the user to design new analog sounds and store them digitally for later use.

So, in 2002, I purchased the basis for my modular synthesizer, and kept adding modules over the next couple of years, until it was eventually 66-spaces full. By 2005, I'd recorded almost enough songs with the synth to release "*Moog-Tastic!*"

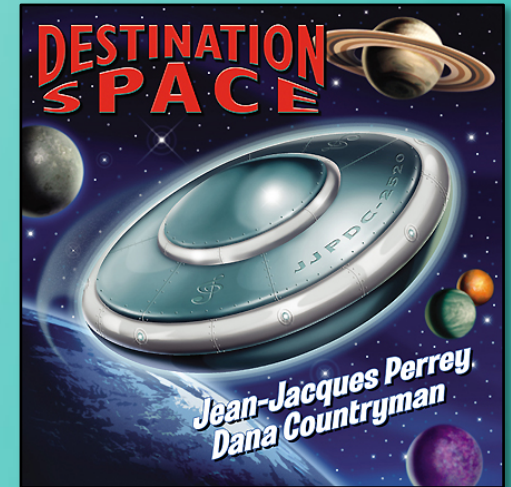
However, before I had the chance to complete and release it, I was given the amazing opportunity to compose and record a new album with the legendary electronic music pioneer, Jean-Jacques Perrey. We officially started our collaborative project



in 2005, and our CD, "*The Happy Electropop Music Machine*" (HEMM) was released on Oglio Records in 2006.

To enable us to release HEMM on time, JJ and I decided to appropriate several songs from the 2005 unfinished version of "*Moog-Tastic!*" These songs were in various stages of completion,

so JJ and I retooled them and completed them together. The songs we "robbed" from the original version of "*Moog-Tastic!*" were: "Mame", "Tico



"Tico", "Harry's Rag" (which we co-composed), and "Chicken on the Rocks." (Recently (April, 2010) our recording of "Chicken on the Rocks" was used in an episode of the TV show "South Park".)

"*Moog-Tastic!*" went to the back of my project list during these years, as JJ and I were plenty busy composing and recording

new tunes for both the HEMM CD, as well as our next release, "*Destination Space*" (Oglio 2008).

Between the years 2006-2008, Jean-Jacques and I toured all over the USA and Europe. It was a great experience and a great honor to be JJ's collaborator, and to perform along side of him.

After "*Destination Space*" had been out for a while, I took a

liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

3



breather from music and decompressed by designing and building an Ondes Martenot-style controller (with my father's help) to use with my big modular synthesizer. With this device, I was able to make my modular synth sound like a Theremin ...only with this controller it is much easier to play the notes *accurately*! (I used the device extensively on this albums' "Farewell Mr. Rota".)

http://www.danacountryman.com/martenot_project/martenot.html

I also devoted 2009 to co-producing, and musically directing a stage musical with my talented wife, Tricia: "Jubalay!" <http://www.jubalay.com>

I finally resumed work on "*Moog-Tastic!*" after the show closed in the summer of 2009. Working hard on this release, and with the help of some very talented soloists, I finally completed "*Moog-Tastic!*" in April 2010.

After such a long, long delay, it feels good to finally have "*Moog-Tastic!*" done! I'm proud of the songs, and this project gave me a chance to record some of my teenage tunes, as well as melodies I've composed recently.

I'm also proud that I was given the gift to compose actual *melodies* for electronic music. It seems that electronic music as we know it today has morphed into mere sequences, disco rhythms, self-running patches, new age-ish chord washes, and rambling transitions. Even most theremin players are content to simply make "woo-woo" noises with their instruments. Noises and "woo-woo's" are fun sometimes, but that's not really music.

My personal musical heroes are composers like Leroy Anderson, Ennio Morricone, Henry Mancini, Burt Bacharach, Lennon & McCartney, and a certain gentleman from France named Jean-Jacques Perrey. Leroy Anderson is particularly a major inspiration for me. My goal in the process of writing a melody is to try and come up with something original that is catchy enough to be remembered. Anderson was a master of this.



liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

4

Studying Anderson's music and life gave me the idea to start composing without having to sit at an instrument. In fact, many of the melodies I've written for this album were written sans instrument: while walking, driving or just standing still — really being anywhere except sitting in front of a piano or a guitar. I've been writing music and songs long enough that I can now 'hear' the chords to a tune in my head, as I compose it. When I finally do sit down to accompany myself, the song usually sounds exactly as I heard it in my head. This is really convenient, as I can write almost anywhere — except where there's other music playing (!)

At a time when writing actual melodies for electronic music seems to now be passé, I'm proud that I'm able to compose new melodies in the traditional song format for this project, and I strive to create many more in the future.

CD NOTES:

Here are some of my notes about the tunes on this CD:

01 LOVESICK MARTIAN BOY (Countryman)

I remember coming up with this melody one morning, while stepping out of the shower! I had been thinking about trying to write something as kind of a tribute to Perrey & Kingsley, and their classic album *"The In Sound from Way Out!"*

I started this recording by using a vintage, all-transistor Rhythm Ace drum machine, which had been made in the '60s. It was one of the first portable drum machines, and it lends a very "retro" feel to this very "retro" tune. By the way, it's the same type of drum machine that Jean-Jacques (and Harry Breuer) used on their 1969 LP *"The Happy Moog!"*



For the lead voices, I used a combination of Ondioline sounds and modular synthesizer sounds. The "nyah nyah" sound, for example, is produced by the Ondioline. It's made by striking the keys with one hand, and manually changing one of the instruments' many filter settings with the other — just a split second after each note is played.

Be sure to check my website to see Nathan Mazur's animated video of "Lovesick Martian Boy":

<http://www.danacountryman.com/Lovesick/MartianBoy.html>



liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

5

02 HAVE MERSEY ON MY MOOG (Countryman)

This was actually one of my very first early efforts at songwriting. I was eighteen when I wrote this tune, and I was a huge fan of early Beatles music (then and now.) I tried to write something in that style. (The original version of the song had lyrics and was originally called “*Tomorrow Afternoon*”. I performed it as a teenager with my very first band, “The Sparklers,” when I lived in Michigan.) For this *new* version, I stripped away the original lyrics, turning this song into an instrumental, and “Mooging” it up!



Dana at age 18

All these years later, I finally got around to recording the tune, but I completely revamped the arrangement. For fun, I purposely threw in all the traditional “Beatle” trademark sounds from those early days: handclaps, double snare-hit drum rhythm, harmonica solo, etc. The Beatles didn’t bring a sax section into their records, until their “middle” period, but I couldn’t resist adding one here. The “saxes” actually came from the cool sounds buried within my vintage ‘80s Yamaha RX-7 drum machine.

03 DAY TRIPPER (Lennon-McCartney)

When I decided to do my own solo “Moog” album, I decided that I *had* to cover an actual Beatles song. Why? Because many of the first Moog synthesizer albums of the ‘60s seemed to almost always feature at least one Beatles song. So, I liked the idea of carrying on the Moog album tradition!

This is the very first recording I made with my favorite drummer, Rick Bowen in 2003. When I called Rick up to ask him to be on the session, I mentioned that I was working up a new version of “Day Tripper”. His response was an enthusiastic: “I’m THERE!” Since this session, Rick and I have worked together on many recordings. It’s a pleasure to work with Rick. He has great instinct about what is needed for each song we work on.



liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

6

Also, my good friend Joe Lacey was visiting from Pennsylvania around the same time. I put a tambourine and a cowbell in his hand, which he played really well here. (Joe is the fantastic cover illustrator, who made the artwork for the two CDs I recorded with Jean-Jacques Perrey.)

<http://www.joelacey.com>

The screaming teenage girls you'll hear, were recorded *thirty-two years ago*, (1978), in my friend Kevin Hoover's garage in Fremont, California! The girls' voices were recorded for another project, which was never released. They had shown up as Kevin and I were recording, so we thought "Why not have them *scream* on our song?" We triple-tracked the six girls to get the sound of *eighteen* girls!

Unfortunately, their names have been lost to time. But I remembered this session, and I dug back into the archives to retrieve their teenage screams! It would have been much easier to dub in some authentic Beatlemania girl screams, but in no way as much fun!



Joe Lacey



The "Teenage Girls"

I also had fun with the arrangement on this one, as I weaved quite a few Beatle songs into this number as countermelodies. Speaking of which: *Quiz Time!* How many actual Beatle songs are referenced, either musically or otherwise, in this arrangement? (Not counting "Day Tripper", of course!) E-mail me with the correct answer, and I'll e-mail you a fun, unreleased tune of mine. dana@danacountryman.com

Finally, former Mott the Hoople keyboardist Morgan Fisher came to visit me in my studio, to see my Ondioline. After he returned to his home in Japan, I asked him to contribute a solo for "Day Tripper". Morgan has an incredible collection of rare electronic music instruments in his own studio, and he used his *Banjo Harmonium* for the solo here. He sent me his solo via the internet, and it fit perfectly into this rather chaotic version of this classic Beatle song.



Morgan Fisher

liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

7

04 VINNIE'S THEME (Countryman)

This tune is a tribute to my dear friend, Vinnie Bell. In case you didn't know, Vinnie is one of the most famous session guitarists of the '60s, and he has played on scores of hit records. Go to <http://www.vinniebell.com> for the full list of hits that he's played on. Prepare to be *amazed!*

Vinnie and I became great friends, and for my birthday in 2004, my wife Tricia arranged for me to fly back to New Jersey, to visit with Vinnie and his late wife, Marilyn. I had already talked him into playing on my album, and I prepared for the event by writing this new tune in Vinnie's honor. I got to record him playing his electric sitar, and electric "Water" guitar here — both of which he invented! The recording session took place at Bennett Studios, in Englewood, New Jersey.

The beautiful trumpet solo was played by Chuck Greene, the music director at the church that my family and I attended at the time in Marysville, Washington.

Rounding it all out, another good friend of mine, Frank Young, played the rest of the acoustic and electric rhythm guitars on this tune.

With Rick Bowen on drums, and me on bass and synthesizers, this track is the one number on this album which involves the most musicians.

The song is dedicated with great affection to my talented friend Vinnie.



Dana with Vinnie Bell



liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

8



05 DESERTED PLANET

(Countryman)

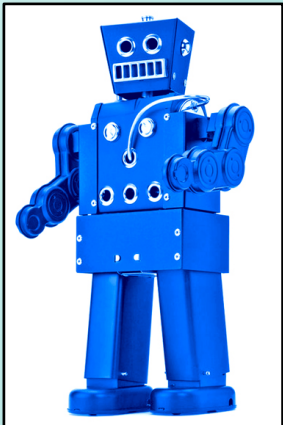
This is another one of the first songs I ever wrote — at age sixteen. The original version was originally a forlorn love song, written for a girl I liked in high school. I always liked the melody and chord progression, so I once again stripped away the original lyrics, and retooled the melody as a plaintive space-age theme.

To add to the songs' melancholy, I asked Fay Lovsky, (a fantastically-talented Dutch singer-songwriter and multi-

instrumentalist) to play Theremin on the song. <http://www.lovsky.com/>

This, she did from her studio in Amsterdam, Holland. Fay then e-mailed me several takes, which I was able to synch up to the recording software on my computer in Everett, Washington — sounding like we had played together in the same room. In fact, *we've never actually met!* But it's an honor to have Fay play on my album. Thank you, Fay.

A friend, Sandra Lee, and my wife Tricia sang the background vocals. I asked them to try to sound like French schoolgirls (!)



06 RAGTIME FOR ROBOTS (Countryman)

This theme was originally a simple piano sketch, which I improvised when I was about twenty. I've always had a great love for ragtime piano, so this tune gave me a chance to do something in that style.

I like the melodic shift during this piece from minor to major, and back and forth. (The title of this song inspired artist Joe Lacey to name one of his illustrations after it, and that artwork appears on the back of the "*Happy Electropop Music Machine*" CD on Oglio Records.)

liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

9

07 MEMORIES OF PARIS (Countryman)

I wrote this at three in the morning, just before heading off to

bed, after a very long night of recording. The tune was composed directly on the Ondioline — the lead instrument featured here. As you can hear, the Ondioline <http://www.ondioline.com> is a very expressive instrument, capable of very subtle vibratos and dynamics. I used a setting that sounds close to an English horn.



I also used my big modular synth, to create the sounds of mandolins and French horns. Running my Yamaha DX-7 (orchestra bell setting) through a vintage Echoplex tape delay device created the carousel-like bells.

I've been to Paris twice, and I have happy memories of my visits there. I've found the people to be very sincere and kind. This melody is my tribute to their traditional French folk music style.

To simulate a "Musette" accordion, I synched up two polyphonic synths, and detuned one of them just slightly, playing them as one unit.

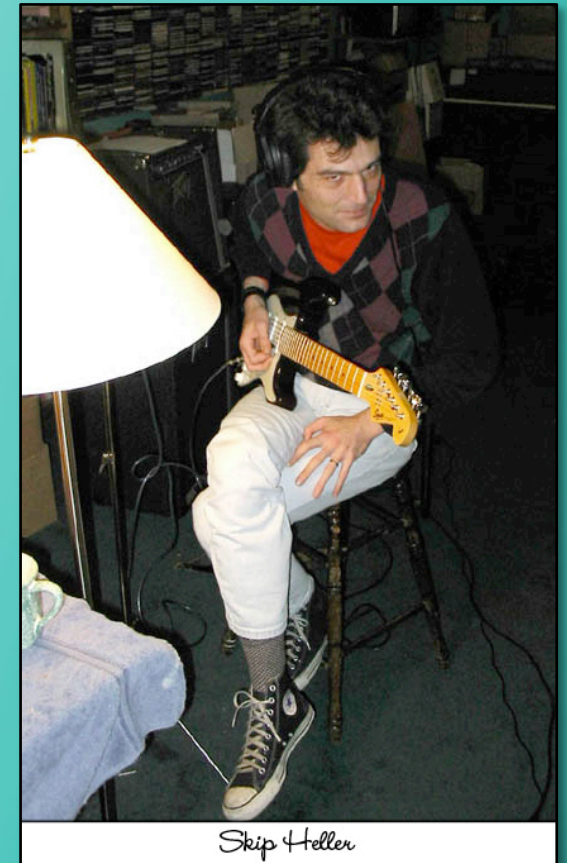
08 COCKTAILS IN SPACE (Countryman)

This is an interesting one, because it was created by recycling two unrelated themes that I had written years ago, but had never used.

Believe it or not, the main theme was originally written as a parody of the classic rock tune "Louie Louie."(!) During my years in the 1980's as the leader and musical director of the Seattle-based comedy vocal group "The Amazing Pink Things", I got the idea of doing a *bossa nova* lounge-version of "Louie Louie".

The idea was to keep the original lyrics, but change the melody completely. Listening to it now minus the lyrics, you'd never guess the tune's real roots! The Pink Things never used my idea, but I revived the music part of it here. The second theme was originally a song I wrote in the '70s, called "Nina". It was inspired by a female cast member of the '70s PBS television show, "Zoom!"

Knowing that ace guitarist Skip Heller was coming to town, I quickly whipped up this arrangement of the two themes into a medley, leaving a space for a jazz guitar solo. I really love the melodic lines that Skip improvised. He played the solo on his \$99 Fender Squier electric guitar, which had given to him by former Cheers' cast member George Wendt.



Skip Heller

liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

10

09 FAREWELL MR. ROTA (Countryman)

I improvised this tune on my modular synthesizer, while I was testing out a new filter module. My father and I had just built the aforementioned Ondes Martenot-styled controller, which you can see and hear samples of on my website.



It was an intense four-month project, which when finished provided me with a new, expressive way to play my modular synthesizer, much like a Theremin.

Unlike the Theremin, this instrument uses a *string* to control the pitch, and has

small indentations on its' woodwork, for one's finger to find the correct notes. Expressive vibrato is achieved by wiggling the playing finger, exactly as a violinist would do. This recording marks the first time I've recorded with the Martenot Controller.

In 2009, I became fascinated with the work of Italian film composer, Nino Rota, and decided to expand this theme and record it as a tribute to Mr. Rota's Italian film-music style.

10 JEAN-JACQUES' THEME (Countryman)

Originally composed as "Moogaroni", I asked Jean-Jacques to contribute some of his famous "crazy tape loops" to this tune. (I had planned all along to call it "Jean-Jacques' Theme" but of course, I didn't tell him that at the time!)

The loops were constructed by long-distance using Skype between my studio (near Seattle) and JJ's home in Switzerland. I left "holes" in the arrangement, specifically for JJ to insert his loops into. He instructed me as to exactly which sounds and rhythms to build the loops from, using the samples of his classic library of sounds. It's a time-consuming process, but a very special one.

It's always an honor to be able to collaborate with Jean-Jacques, and I knew I didn't want to release this solo project without having a contribution from him!

This number is of course, dedicated to my "musical Godfather", Jean-Jacques. <http://www.jeanjacquesperrey.com>



liner notes

MOOG-TASTIC!

11

11 HALLOWEEN AT MOOG MANOR (Countryman)

I originally composed this theme as a minor key “Count Basie”-type swing number. However, as sometimes happens during process of recording, the arrangement slowly started going in a different direction than I had planned. Suddenly, the music reminded me more of a Halloween tune, and less of a Count Basie tune! So I went in the Halloween direction.

I had made friends with Florida jazz musicians Ike Reeves and Kurt Walter Uhlig last year, when I restored a vinyl album they’d recorded in 1973 (with the late, wonderful singer Lori Lee) for a CD reissue. <http://twosidesofthetrio.com> They seemed to like the work I did on their project, so I asked them to play on my album, which they kindly agreed to do. Kurt played the vibes (the *real deal*, not a sample!), and Ike played the Yamaha DX-7, making it sound like a jazz guitar solo instrument.



The sinister speaking voice you hear is that of my 81-year old father, Darrell Countryman. I remembered a time in the ‘60s, when my dad and I recorded our own “Halloween sound effects” tape. I was about 10-years old then. Sadly, that original tape’s been lost to time, but while working on this project I had the idea to relive that time, and record my dad’s “scary” voice, as a kind of tribute to our original father-and-son Halloween tape, from so long ago. I think he did a great job!

Thanks, Dad!

The witch voice is from my wife Tricia, who also sings background vocals on this tune. I hadn’t originally expected to have either spoken vocals or sound effects on this arrangement. But that’s the direction in which I ended up going, and it really turned out to be a lot of fun putting this

track together. I’ve always loved Halloween music!

This was the most recent tune composed just before I completed this album.



Kurt Walter Uhlig



Ike Reeves

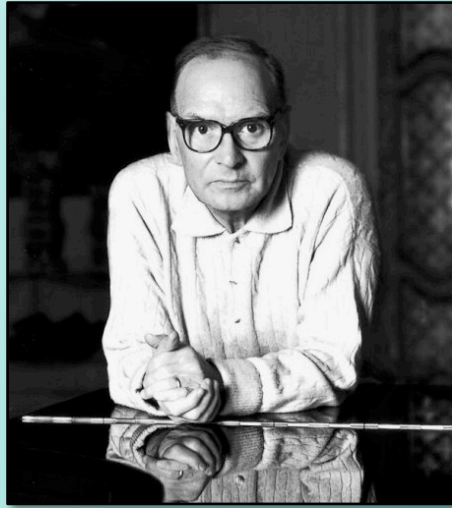


liner notes

12 LA CALIFFA (Ennio Morricone)

In 2009, I also became fascinated with the work of Italian film composer Ennio Morricone. I already had known of the slightly campy music that he had composed for Spaghetti Western films (“The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”, etc.), but I had never known about his beautiful, melodic orchestral scores until last year. When I heard “La Califfa”, I fell in love with its’ haunting theme.

Three-time world champion Dutch whistler Geert Chatrou contacted me through MySpace, and expressed an interest in performing on my CD. I loved the idea. I’d previously



left a note complimenting one of his videos.

<http://www.geertchatrou.com>

I needed a slow ballad for this project, so I came up with the concept of rearranging this piece of music for synthesizer, instead of symphonic orchestra. I focused on solos for the Ondioline and Geert’s whistling.

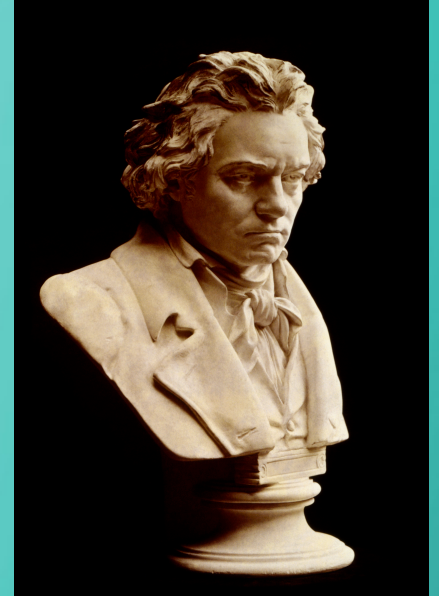
It’s a shame that I didn’t get to use Geert’s fantastic *speed-whistling*. He’s amazing. But for this version, he added just the right, haunting touch. Thanks, Geert!



13 STORM OVER BEETHOVEN

(Piano Sonata No. 14 in C#m, Op. 27, No. 2, Third movement)
(Ludwig van Beethoven)

I only took a few piano lessons as a child, but I do remember playing Beethoven’s plaintive “Moonlight Sonata”. What I didn’t know until recently, is that he wrote three movements to the piece — ending with this very angry “*presto agitato*” theme. It was originally composed for, and performed on solo piano. But when I first heard it on piano only, a new arrangement popped into my head, featuring bombastic rock drums, and wild synthesizer sounds! I guess it’s a duet for synthesizer and drums now.



This recording was a two-year process, involving a month of pre-preparation as I painstakingly and slowly wrote out the music by ear, using MIDI technology. Then, the computer MIDI signals were sped up and sent to my modular synthesizer, and recorded on mono audio tracks directly on the computer. It took over 48 separate tracks to finish this recording. (I took the artistic liberty to add a few countermelodies of my own, sorry, Ludwig!)

Neither my drummer Rick Bowen nor I read music, so this was recorded by gut instinct, with Rick improvising drum parts completely on the fly, as he listened to my already-recorded tracks. I considered editing the piece down from its’ original seven minutes-plus version, but after trying that, it just didn’t sound right. I guess Beethoven knew exactly what he was doing.

I feel that if Beethoven were alive today, he’d be open-minded enough to have tried an arrangement similar to this.

MOOG-TASTIC!

13

SUPER-SECRET HIDDEN TRACK (Countryman)

I guess it's not a secret anymore! The story on this piece, is that I had been asked to compose a short, original ring tone for a company. When their project didn't happen right away, I decided to recycle the "ring tone" melody that I'd written, and end this project on a lighthearted note with it.

Thanks for checking out "Moog-Tastic!" I hope you'll enjoy it...

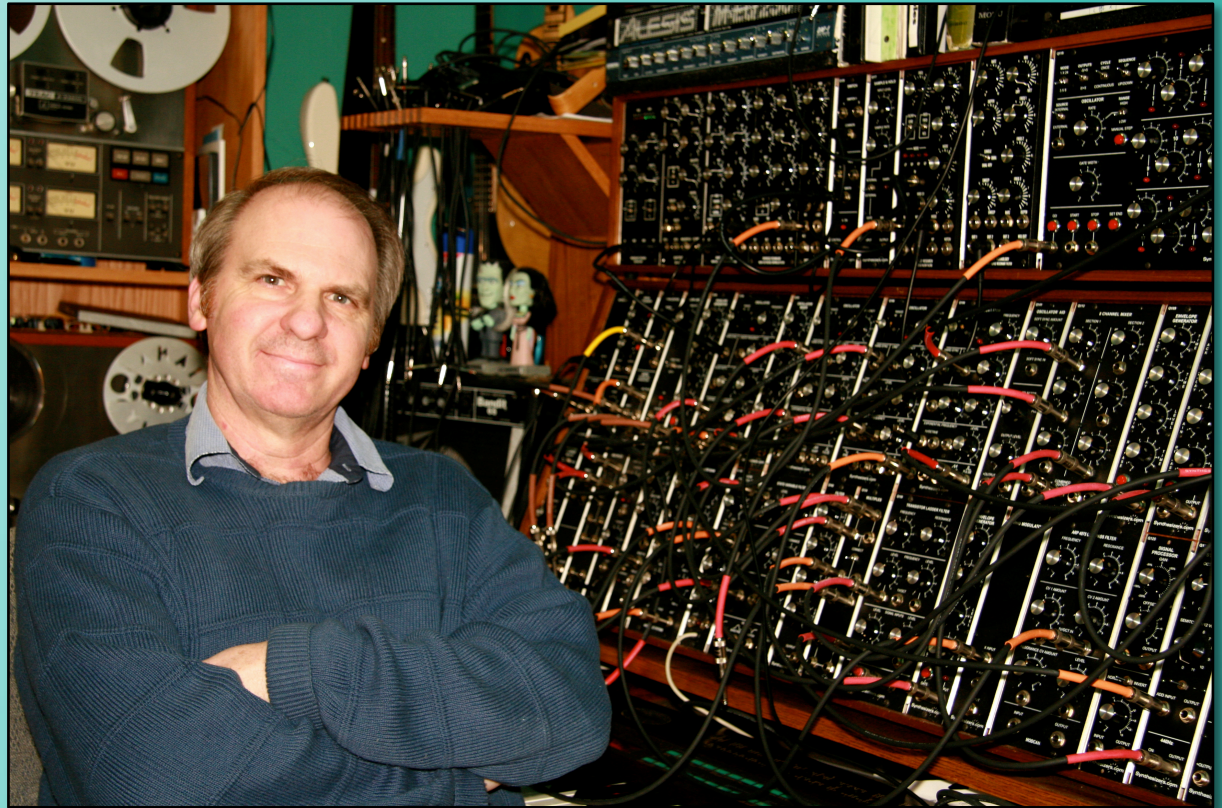
Dana Countryman
Everett, WA USA April, 2010

<http://www.danacountryman.com>

Extra-special thanks to the following for their support and encouragement:

Tricia Countryman, Matt Countryman, Darrell and Marion Countryman, Frank M. Young, Jean-Jacques Perrey, Carl Caprioglio, Mark Griswold, Neil Sussman: Atty at Law Mark Copeland, Vinnie Bell, Dorothy Buller, Michelle Moog-Koussa at the Moog Foundation, Roger Arrick, Rick Bowen, and all my Facebook buddies!

Extra-extra special thanks to Mark Griswold for his photography help!



liner notes