



© 2007 Mal Meehan

The Passing of an Electronic Music Legend

Dana Countryman
Friday, November 4, 2016

It is with great sadness that I announce the passing of my dear friend, legendary electronic musician, Jean-Jacques Perrey, who died today, November 4th, 2016 at the age of 87. He peacefully left our planet, near his home in Lausanne, Switzerland with his beloved daughter Patricia by his side.

For those who don't realize it, Jean-Jacques first started recording electronic music in 1952, long before the Moog synthesizer was first made for sale in 1967. Relocating from Paris to New York City, JJ actually owned and recorded with the second Moog ever produced, and with his musical partner Gershon Kingsley, they released their first Moog album -- almost two years before Wendy Carlos released her first Moog album. Jean-Jacques was truly the pioneer of popular electronic music.

His crazy, happy music has been heard everywhere from commercials, to Sesame Street - in hip-hop songs, in dance remixes and most famously, for decades in the delightful featured music in Disneyland's "Main Street Electrical Parade". In recent years, his music has even made appearances on The Simpsons, and on Comedy Central's "South Park".

As a teenager growing up in the '70s, I was charmed by Jean-Jacques' inventive Moog albums released by Vanguard Records, and many times I secretly would smuggle those albums into my high school French class. There, instead of conjugating French verbs and nouns, (when the teacher wasn't looking) I would carefully sneak peeks at the back cover liner notes. I'd spend the class time dreaming impossible dreams of someday owning a Moog synthesizer of my own, and having a chance to twirl its many knobs, to unleash its wild cornucopia of never-heard-before sounds.

Little could I possibly have known that someday I would meet the great Mssr. Perrey, and even more unbelievably, that someday I'd become great friends with him. It would have been too unfathomable for me at the age of sixteen to think that I'd someday be writing and recording original music with Jean-Jacques, or that in the future I'd be performing concerts with him, across the USA and Europe. But that happened.

Our friendship spanned 22 years, and we spent many hours together, both touring, and recording our two albums for Carl Caprioglio's Oglio Records in 2006 and 2008. These were times I now look back on with fond memories, of sitting side-by-side with the great man, and of him unselfishly sharing his many musical secrets with me.

Jean-Jacques' music meant a lot to people, and more than once, after one of our concerts I had the pleasure of meeting his fans, who would come up to me with tears in their eyes, thanking me for helping bring him to their city, and for the chance to meet Mssr. Perrey.

JJ loved his fans, and he would light up the stage with his bigger-than-life smile, and good-time Moog music. From my place next to him onstage, I would often notice many smiles on the faces in the audience, returning his beaming smile back to him. His music, and his personality just DID that to people.

When I wasn't able to tour with JJ, our good friend Chazam did shows with him. They also recorded an excellent album, "Ecklektronics", for which I helped them link up with Holland's Basta Records. In his lifetime, he recorded over 24 album and countless commercials.

If he were here today, there is nothing that Jean-Jacques would like more than to think that his fans were playing his crazy, funny, catchy Moog music right now -- and smiling, instead of being sad. His motto and creed in almost every interview that he gave, was "Keep smiling, and be happy!"

He was the master of happiness.

Thank you, Jean-Jacques for all the happiness you created in your lifetime --- music that will live on for generations to come. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your life, and for letting my wife and son and I include you in our family.

You have enriched many lives, especially mine.

Farewell, maestro. And thank you.

- Dana Countryman
Everett, WA Nov. 4th, 2016