

Bistro Mirage: The Story So Far

Okay, so check it out if you're interested. First off, the "project" I've been working on for the past couple-three years that you're now helping me out on is called Bistro Mirage. The whole concept stems from some graffiti we saw in Paris, or, more precisely, from a photo Marcia took of that graffiti. Despite having had more than two years to think about it now, I still don't know exactly what the mirage metaphor is all about, but I'm working on it.

The things I like best about the Bistro Mirage title are its initials. Telling Marcia that I'm off to "work on more BM stuff" (which at various times means recording or mixing or writing or editing or doing website work) always helps me approach the day's artistic endeavor with a certain egoless-ness, which I'm just saying is a good thing for me whose ego gets way too involved and puffed up on a regular basis.

Likewise, when I say, I've been working on a *recording project* for a couple of years now and it's really coming along nicely, I'm almost done in fact, I could, and perhaps should, for accuracy's sake, say instead that I've been *down in the basement playing with myself* for a couple of years now and I'm getting sort of tired of it so I think I'll head back upstairs for a while. Lest I put on airs, you see, it's best to phrase it this way. Except for some help from you and a couple of other musicians and a few people listening to some of the early versions, BM has existed almost entirely in my head and my head alone. I am, indeed, getting tired of these 10 or 12 songs--it's almost as if I've developed sore spots in my psyche listening to them over and over, nascent blisters, and I'll be glad when it's all done

As for what I'll do when I call BM quits, slam everything onto the website and start doing other shit, I don't know. Be BM free for a while, for one thing, I guess. But in the mean time, while the final push is being made and as you've been drawn in, let me explain the story so far.

The universe maybe wants us to experience stuff and process those experiences into whatever passes for our art form (think particular shapes and sizes of various BM's). When we hit those transcendent states we are beyond fully alive, and the universe seems to get a kick out of that. The art we make, shit...the universe just LOVES that stuff. The universe (via its human fiduciary agents) likely values all the *art* in Paris more than all the other *real estate and personal property* in that most beautiful of cities. Think of that.

My little offering to the universe's grand pleasure has been my writing and singing and playing, which I'll do until I die probably. I've focused more and more in recent years on annual monologues that summarized the zeitgeist, from my perspective, and placed in context my most recently written tunes. But since my last such performance in November, 2010, I've felt, like, zero desire to play publicly and instead I've been entertaining an interest in weaving found audio (ambient cafe and street noises from Paris, mostly) with recorded music--mine and that of others--to create something like a musical collage, a superimposition, a double exposure...something like that.

The first attempt at creating this multi-leveling of sounds led to the twin pieces *Madison to Pont Marie* and *Mirage*. *MTPM* acts as a 3:35 intro to *Mirage*, while *Mirage* itself is yet another attempt to both capture something of that transcendence mentioned earlier, and to attempt to coming to terms with the whole *Mirage* metaphor. That's why *Mirage* occupies the lead-off spot, sequence-wise.

I've also infused *Mirage* with loads of ambient street sounds. It's my poster girl for the whole musi-collage thing. In the later drafts the street sounds had to be way toned down in order to even make out the lyrics is how bad it was at the start. I now find that my initial idea of infusing tons of ambient sound in each song has given way to a more moderate approach in which some songs have no ambients and others only hints. However, trios of songs are being welded together into triptychs that employ ambients as connective devices, so the heavy emphasis on musi-collage will still mark the work...like yesterday's corn showing up in tomorrow's stool, to bring the self-important tone of this document down a few notches.

So, we've got the 10 or 12 songs, the ambient connective tissue joining them into a quartet of trios, and a website for a dissemination vehicle. The website's theme--a Parisian Cafe--echoes the setting I find most conducive to both *experiencing* it all (really digging deep to be the eyes, ears, nose and throat of the universe) and *processing* those experiences. Another fellow would choose to display his BM-like artifacts in a forested web-setting, perhaps, or on some virtual Civil War battlefield. Whatever. To each their own. For me, it's a cafe.

So, the whole website thing is set up as if you are joining me at the cafe. My cafe. The cafe in my head. Bistro *Mirage*. You can stand at the bar (Au Zinc) for a quick espresso (the menu will offer one tune, a few poems, a short Marcia photo slideshow) or, if you're so inclined, you can grab a table (Salle) and sit a while (menu offerings include a longer song, maybe even a trio, more elaborate photo-infused writings) and, the final option, Terrasse (an outside table where you will linger longer still featuring appropriate menu options).

Did I mention the cafe tunes? Jazz standards backed by real cafe audio. Really quite nice, I think. And the longer written pieces, each devoted to one of the fourteen days I've spent in Paris (Hence the collection's title, *Parasite Fortnight*). This is all the stuff that's going to be hanging out at Bistro *Mirage*.

And now, for a brief recap of our rehearsal date last Saturday...

First off, thanks again. It's a pleasure to finally hear you play and I'm impressed by your skill and sensitivity to the tunes. I know for sure I want to rehearse these four tunes with you again in June when you're back from your travels with the hopes of getting a couple of studio dates in July or August: *Mirage*, *Robes*, *Celt*, *Jubilee*.

In preparation for rehearsing these four, I'll write out simple charts we can both follow in order to make it easier to dial in on approaches for various sections.

I also heard you loud and clear that you'd like to have a shot at Abraham, PFD, Too Soon, Crash and It Flies. For the time being I'm only going to budget for two days in the studio and my understanding is we can probably only do two tunes per day, so I'm hoping we can squeeze in a third song each day if things go exceptionally well. With that in mind, you might consider which two of these five you'd like to place at the top of your list.

I feel silly that I didn't include a click track on all the tunes I sent you earlier. I will remedy that soon and send you new versions with a prominent click in the mix.

Finally, as I've been told in the studio many times, the key to a great recording is to rehearse a part over and over, then be able and willing to winnow out 95% of the notes (in your cast, hits) when the tape is rolling. It's a real challenge, but I've heard it work time and time again. I'm sure that's what I'll be asking of you...just so's you're not surprised when the time comes.

If you'd like more detailed input on the stuff you played Saturday based on the notes I wrote, let me know and I'll type them up for you--won't take but a minute. Otherwise, play on, my friend, and enjoy the warmth of spring and look for a CD bearing click-tracked versions of nine tunes soon and I'll see you at the Malt House this evening...

M