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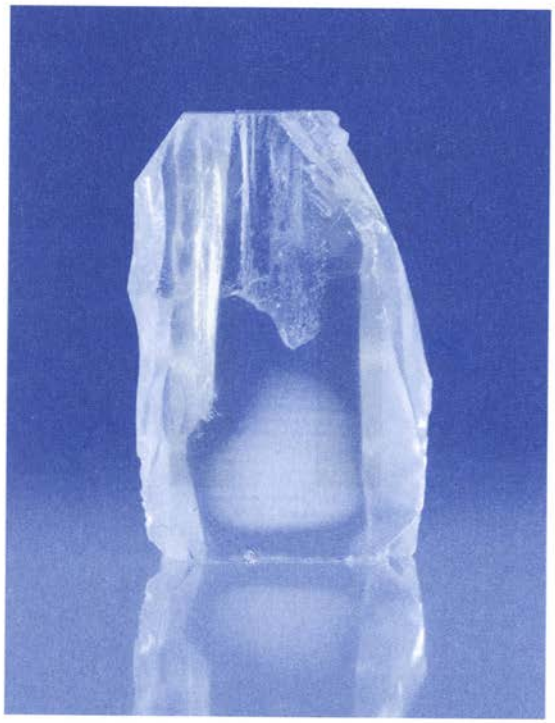

“pure, abstract, vibration”

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P.I.N.A. — Private Issue New Age, The Last Undiscovered Genre of Rare Records

Anthony Pearson

I was trying to figure out how to do this today, and I was doing my research and doing my outline, and I was thinking about this idea of “contra mundum”—self against the world—and it took me a minute to think about what this topic really has to do with the self against the world. It seems that New Age music and rare music and rare records are these very peculiar things, and that the people who are into those things are very, very kind of isolated a lot of the time, but the idea of New Age is also a very social idea, and there is a strange conflation that goes on between “the self,” which you are supposed to get rid of, and “the self,” which is the constant preoccupation of the New Age movement. So, you have self-realization, and you have self-involvement, self-aggrandizement, self-indulgence—all of these things that lead to this idea of the Hippies becoming Yuppies, becoming New Agers. And I see that everyone here is young enough that I don’t have to feel bad about saying that people who are around sixty years old really are so involved in thinking that they are the greatest generation. They didn’t die on the beach at Normandy like the one before them, but they felt that, “Man, we experienced the ‘60s. This was the Revolution.” And there was this idea of self-involvement that really got caught up in that. So, perhaps some of the most annoying people in the world are people who are around the age of sixty years old. My parents were of the prior generation, which is kind of unusual. My mother was older when I was born; my father was fifty-five, but my wife’s father is one of these guys, you know, who get very self-involved in that way.

I’m digressing a little bit, but I’m just getting warmed up here. One of the things I try not to do when I’m speaking, which often happens, is I get kind of indignant and crazy, so just settle me down if I lose focus here. And I will pause for long periods of time, too. There are three parts to the talk. One of the parts of

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the talk is a kind of personal narrative—self—and it's about how I come to work on discovering rare records and dealing rare records and getting into rare records and all of this kind of thing. And one component of that part of the talk is about the information age and how the information age changed being able to discover things of rare beauty. One of the things that you used to be able to do in rare records is you used to be able to find any kind of music you wanted anywhere because no one knew what the good items were and what the bad items were unless they were an aficionado. Then, in the information age, as things caught up to speed, people could discover what was good and what was bad, and they were able to keep the good ones and get rid of the bad ones. Then, when you went to look at records "in the field"—as they say—all you would see is rotten ones that sucked. So that happened because of blogs and Ebay and Popsike, and these websites where everybody showed everyone what was good.

"Good," then again, is a matter of perspective. Good, for me, was New Age records, which most people think are boring and, still, are not very collectable. There are very few that are of value, and you can still find them—at least I guess you can. I haven't been looking. I think the first things that went were doo-wop records and old blues records and old rock-n-roll records and very old jazz records—these were easily known as valuable items. Then later it was rock and soul, and then even later it was folk records. And then everybody knew that religious records were good, and they were taking all of the Christian records. And then, finally, there's New Age records and late, late country records from, like, the late '80s—like, really bad records. So, there is this idea of the information age creating a phenomenon where all of the good items would get enveloped into people's hands, and still having pleasure in going to a thrift store, or going to some eccentric who has twenty or thirty thousand records, and you would still find New Age records. And they were rare records, just not valuable records, necessarily—although some of them are.

The other component of the talk is about the actual music itself and the history of the music and how it came to become a popular music genre. Because the distinction with New Age music is that although it is related to the post-progressive rock music

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of Popol Vuh and Tangerine Dream and this kind of synthesizer music, and while it is also related to music which is coming out of jazz that you would have it on the ECM label—these later, atmospheric kind of jazz records—and it's also related to religious records at times, it is not to be mistaken for a genre of music that is non-commercial. It is much more commercial than one would think, and certain artists really set about popularizing it. Then there is the famous record label, Windham Hill, which you have probably often seen, which came out of a folk music tradition into what was known as New Age music, which was George Winston's Autumn (1980) and Winter Into Spring (1982), this kind of piano-scape music, which is as tedious as can be and absolutely terrible. But there are some artists on that label that are quite good, and, of course, I'm speaking in hyperbole and I'm being kind of opinionated here.

This is a picture of me digging through twenty or twenty-five thousand records in a storage locker. I used to do this all the time. I learned to deal in records because a friend of mine was really into rare records. As a boy I was always into books and records and music, and my brother was into surfing and skateboarding and all of this very physical stuff that was much more exciting. I was bookish, but the records I had—even by the time I learned about rare records—were common records, or they were records of my generation. I had a collection of punk records and things like that. But I went into the bedroom of my friend's mother's house one day in '95, when I first came back to L.A. He had been telling me on the phone, "Gosh, I'm dealing records to these guys in England." And I'm, "What are you talking about?" And he's like,

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"Man, they tell me which ones to find and I go out there and I find them." And I'm like, "Rare records?" And he's like, "Yeah." And then he took me in there and he showed me, and he had the most esoteric, unbelievable, weirdest things that you could ever imagine. I had thought that I understood records, but once he showed me all of those things I couldn't believe it, because they were so unusual. And he got me going, he introduced me to this guy in London named Gerald Short, and a guy in Zurich named Hubert Horst, and these guys would come to L.A. and they would go over to his mom's house and they would buy records from him. Ramona and I—my wife Ramona—we moved back to L.A. in '96. We had met in school in the Bay Area, and we went to UCLA for graduate school and had no way of making a living or getting by. We were on scholarship. So, Tony taught me how to deal records, and I got into it. It was fun, and it was before the days of records being known. Everything was done by fax machine, and everything was done by lists.

This fellow to the far left is named Hiro Faruchi, and he was responsible for exporting over 250,000 records from the United States to Japan over a thirty year period. He no longer does this, but he worked for a famous record store in the 1980s called Manhattan Records. He was like a mentor to Tony and me, and he showed us everything that was good. We met him at a flea market. He would come every six weeks and he'd give us these sheets. He'd print out what was good, and he'd tell us, "Okay, this one's good; this one's good," you know. And we'd go out and we'd try to find them. He was so good at what he did and knew so much because he had done it for so many years.

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That's Hiro Faruchi, his helper, Kobe, and that's me at age twenty-six, and this is Tony Sherman, who taught me records early on. So this was 1997 or something, and this was after I had given Hiro a bunch of records and he had given me a bunch of money, and I was happy and it all worked out. And it was really, really fun and exciting, because it was stimulating to my mind that I could absorb all of this information, and it was stimulating to me socially because I would meet all of these great weirdos who would invite me over to their place, or people who had 100,000 records in a warehouse or whatever, and Ramona and I would travel and go everywhere doing this thing.

This is a sheet that came from a guy named Takuma Sazuki. Hiro used to pay us $15 or $20, and one day in comes this fax through the fax machine where this guy starts writing down these prices: $150, $200. And I was thinking, "Oh my god." And he's writing in broken English, asking me for this or that. And soon I realized that these things really are rare and special to people in Japan. It was a very, very explosive time in Japan for rare records. It's not that way anymore. During the '80s and early '90s they exported incredible amounts of rare records.

So, this is a sheet from Hiro that he'd send us every month, and he'd cross them off and we'd go through it together. For example, this item here—Jackson 5, ABC—I'd say, "That's a common item. You need as many of those as I can get you?" And he'd say, "I want as many of those as you can get me."

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And I said, "What about the condition? Does it matter if it's messed up?" And he's like, "I want it in any condition." And I'd ask, "It doesn't matter if it has the wrong record in the jacket?" And he'd reply, "No, I just want it." So I'd go, and I'm doing it, and I'm getting this many, and I'd run ads in the back of Goldmine —this is pre-Internet, so there were publications like Goldmine that would come out and have long lists of records that people would offer for sale—and I'd say in there, "Jackson 5, ABC: I'll pay $6, any condition." And people would send me reams of these things. And finally I asked him after selling him 150 copies of this thing, "What is the deal with this?" And he explained that the kids in Shibuya-ku, which is the young district in Tokyo where all of the kids are up on the fashion and all this, they accessorize with this item. They don't listen to it, they carry it under their arm. And that really changed my perspective on the entire thing. And he was serious.

So, what he was very, very into at the time—which was '98, '99, 2000—was urban music, and this was extremely popular in Japan, in Tokyo. Some of these items, it's not just rare rap records. It's R&B records, and Monica, and Cyndi Lauper. It's pop records. And these are records that were pressed in the '90s. We quickly realized that we could go to one-stops and distributorships and pools, and we could buy these things, sealed, for $3 or $4, but you would have to go to the south and to the midwest to do this. You'd go to a distributorship. And so Ramona and I would travel and we'd try to find these special items for them.

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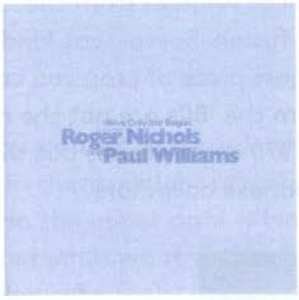
These are all soft rock records that he wanted. This is a religious record, Otis Skillings. Top row, third over, that's a rare record that was a self-published record by Paul Williams, the little guy from the movie Smokey and the Bandit (1977). He is a wonderful songwriter and he recorded this record himself. And this is the idea of "private issue" that you'll find in the title of the talk, which is when somebody makes something themselves in their garage. [Question, inaudible] That record is called Meet Triste Janero (1968). It's a record from Texas on a label called White Whale. I still have all these things in my mind. There is something about my mind—and I do it with my own pictures now—I am able to categorize things and remember them. I am shitty at basketball. I can't sing and play guitar at the same time, but if I see something I can remember it: a face, or a record, or a picture.



This has some curiosities on it. This is one of these things where if you look at the third row, far left, there is this woman playing the guitar. Her name is Joyce Cooling, and this was a Brazilian fusion record from the mid-'80s where she would sing and kind of scat and play, and it looked like a real piece of junk, you know. You would learn which ones were under the radar and would look like not much, and that was one of them, and it was very valuable. It was like a $250 record, or something. So it was very interesting how some of them looked good but they had no monetary value. Some of them looked terrible but had monetary value. Some of them looked great but sounded terrible. Some of them looked terrible but sounded great. I was just awash in this way of reasoning these records. For example, this one was on a budget label.

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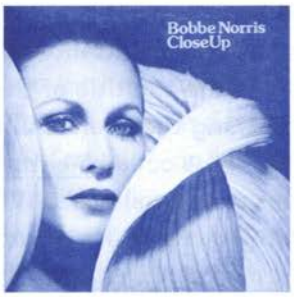
It was a crappy pressing, but it had something on it. And this was all the Japanese. They had a special taste for particular things.



These two at the top—these women—it was a similar thing. They liked this ‘80s bossa nova music, this jazz fusion music: Bobbe Norris and Judy Roberts. These are by a group called Feather, and this was a group from Los Angeles from the ‘80s that was another one of these jazz-fusion-bossa-scat kind of things. And this looked like the biggest piece of crap you could imagine. Generally, jazz records from the ‘80s are not the most exciting thing. Jazz kind of died in 1970 or whatever, but these things were very exciting to the Japanese collectors.

This is an article on me that appeared in a music journal called Wax Poetics. There are different kinds of people who collect records, and one of the types are these people who use music to put into production for rap and hip-hop and R&B music, and this journal was very much centered around that. Meanwhile, I was

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very much not necessarily centered around that, and being the indignant contrarian that I am I set out to shake this kid up who came over to my house to do this article. And I was talking about how I was into New Age and how I was into Steven Halpern, and how I really liked Pat Metheny, and I don't really like rap music—all this stuff. This is a picture of me on my mother's lawn smoking a marijuana cigarette with all my records around, and there's a Christian record behind me. So, I was trying to be antithetical to the whole ideal of beats and production-oriented music.

I had my own set of records that were varied. I had a Pat Metheny record in there, which is this horrendous, almost smooth jazz music. In the upper right is Halpern's Christening for Listening (1977), which is what we are listening to now. Steven Halpern is this fellow who really created New Age music. In the 1970s he was an ordinary musician—he played rock and R&B and jazz—and he got into doing music for one's health and he would try to create this soothing relaxation music. None of the record companies would pick this stuff up—they didn't like it—so he started pressing it out of his own garage, and then he became a big entity in music. But I really liked it. It was very relaxing, and I was getting older and I didn't like things that were loud.

This next sheet is all Christian records. This is when things started to get really get out of hand. People were so into every single kind of music that you could possibly imagine there was no stone left unturned. And this guy, Ken Scott, out in Ohio created this thing called The Archivist, which went on to three or four editions—here it is—and this is nothing but a book chock full of home-pressed Christian music records, one after another after

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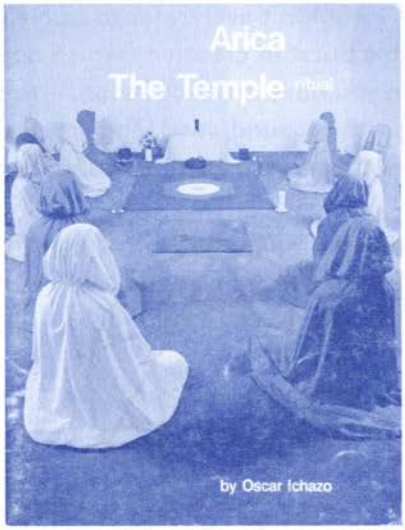
another of them. Of course, the thing that is of interest is not that it is some guy crooning church hymns. It's not choir music, and it's not spoken word. It's rock and folk music. So, I think that that's what Ken Scott really liked about it. And, of course, they're gorgeous because they are homemade. I have found a number of them, kept very few of them. It's not the content that bothered me, it really was the quality of most of the music. But as objects they are absolutely fascinating things. At the bottom right, this woman sings a song about abortion, and it has the sound of a beating heart throughout the music. It's staggering. It's really, really scary and yet very soft and gentle.



Okay. So now we are into the hardcore shit. This is Arica, which is a human potential movement that was founded by Oscar Ichazo, who was a Chilean thinker who based his group on Gurdjieff. The distinction is that he was using not only sermon and writing and philosophy, he was also using music, he was using art, he was using ceremony, he was using dance, he was using calisthenics. This is Arica Psychocalisthenics (1977). When you go through it it teaches you the movements and there is a whole regimen of how to do this. This is The Temple Ritual of Arica (1976).

So, the thing with Arica, which was better musically, is that it was really happening in New York and in Connecticut, so

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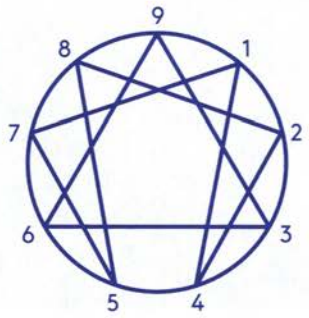
with New Age music you get these men and women who really know music and really know how to play music because they approach human potential movements, cult situations, recovery —any of these different things—coming from a background of rock and roll and jazz. So, a lot of these people are really f'ed up on drugs, and then they want to get their shit together and they get into "fill in the blank." So, this is a positive thing for these folks. Another thing that was very much like this was Synonym, which was down at the beach, which was a drug recovery movement that was full of jazz musicians like Art Pepper and these other guys who went down there and tried to clean up their act. So, in New Age music, and especially in the early incarnations of the music, which I wouldn't even refer to as New Age music, you get this incredible burst of creativity which comes from real musicians. So, when you have an Arica record—there are three of them or something—they sound good. They're not just Yanni. So, in the early years there are a lot of exciting records you can find from the '70s.



Ichazo would do a lot of really really heavy stuff to get your attention. He would sit you down at a console with an image of the Enneagram, and you would stare at this thing with flashlights in your face and put on the music and sit there for twelve hours. And if you read on the Internet about this a lot of people say, "He gave me LSD. He raped me. He ruined my life." So, you can see that a lot of this kind of thing starts to unfold in this terrible way. You get that with EST, which became Landmark. You get that with Synonym, with People's Temple. There's a record by People's Temple as well, and Charles Manson had his own record, as you probably know. So, a lot of these people were very into music, very

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into art, and very into mind control. And there is also a positivist aspect to Arica and to Synonym and to a lot of these groups. And a lot of this stuff on the Internet is hearsay, so it's impossible to really know how it would benefit one or how it would make one completely fall under the spell of this sort of thing. Maybe turn up the lights and I can show you some objects, some records, some books, and after this we can listen.

This is Arica Audition (1972). In my copy somebody happened to have cut out some Arica literature and a reprinted article from Psychology Today.

[Question] How did you decide what to keep during all of those record digs?

I guess I can go back to how we did this. Before the information age exploded into esoterica, and people could pick out all of the different things that they wanted and all of the different things of value, we used to just go at it wildly. Tony and I would hear about some guy in Garden Grove who had all this stuff, and we'd go down there and we'd find good ones. Eventually this kind of thing ceased to exist, and I think things split off into two groups of people. One is like Douglas McGowan, who is here tonight, who is very good at finding individuals who made great records and meeting them and knowing them and becoming part of their lives and discovering their music. The other way of tracking and finding music was to find people who worked in music, which is what I eventually began to do once things became so difficult I

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could no longer find records. So, I would find people who worked in radio, who worked for Columbia, who worked for Capitol, and Ramona and I would fly to St. Louis, or fly to Chicago, and we'd buy libraries of records. So, I often was buying a lot of music that I didn't really like, and Douglas was getting all of the good ones that I really wanted, because he was finding things that were rare and special, and I was finding things that were mostly major label items. So, it's interesting the way that things split off. As far as the criteria for me to keep a record, a lot of the things that I kept were things that I found, and I'm missing things. I'm not an expert on New Age music. Sure, I know more than the guy driving down the street out there, but some people really seek out special things. I would find things and I would take pleasure in them and I would keep them, but I never kept a lot. I have maybe a thousand records or something.

This is very nice. My friend mailed me this the other day. See how he is wearing the socks with the sandals and all of that? The whole look of the thing and the tactility of it: that was what really inspired me to say," Gosh I really like that." And, of course, it sounds good.

These I brought tonight because these are from Culver City, which is kind of special. And these are common, they're not rare items. Robert Bearns and Ron Dexter. They are New Age music records.

This record: I was talking about this guy, Steven Halpern, who is the godfather of New Age music who started in the mid-1970s recording this music that we are listening to. He tried to find a way to take people away from music like Stravinsky and progressive rock, where you would have to think to listen to it

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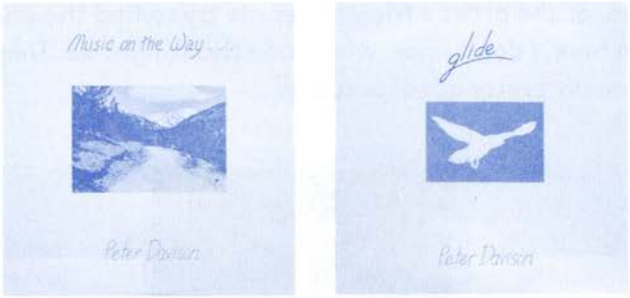
and follow it, and you'd have to feel the tension of the changes in the music. Instead, he tried to create something which would stimulate the waves in the brain that would promote relaxation, and he had a lot of success with this. He would play it in mental institutions for people and he would play it in hospitals for people, and his whole thing was healing people through music. And as I mentioned, he became this guy who wound up selling millions of records.



This is still my favorite kind of thing, because it is very simple. These are records by a guy named Peter Davison, who Douglas introduced me to maybe five years ago. He lives in Santa Monica. He recorded, for better or worse, what we might call New Age music, which may or may not apply to what he's doing. Douglas took me to meet him at the Starbucks in Santa Monica on Main Street. For some reason he didn't want us over to his house—I don't know why—but he met us there. And we said, "Hey man, what happened to the records?" Turns out he threw them all in the dumpster. Because the true rare record is not the one that someone made only 500 pieces or 1000 pieces of. It's the one that somebody made 500 or 1000 pieces of, sold 50, and after twenty years of looking at the thing just capitulates and throws it in a dumpster. So there are only 50 pieces out there in the world, regardless of the fact that they made 1000. Now, there are more than 50 of these; they are still to be found. But he was lovely, and he now makes the music at the end of television programs. Ramona and I were watching some kind of documentary on aquatic life or something, and we were, "Gosh, isn't that music great?" And sure enough it was Peter Davison doing the music.

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[Question] Anthony, are most Private Issue New Age records from Southern California?

A lot of them are from California, and a lot of them are from the Bay Area. And they are from all over.

[Question] And did the artists themselves often do the design for the albums?

I think so, or the artist's friends. Let me try to find the crudest one I have in here. I don't know which one that might be. They are all looking really pretty good, actually.

This is one that Douglas and I both found at about the same time. A dealer I knew in Texas found reams of these at a Half Price Books. He was selling them on a list. I bought them, and sure enough, it was synthesizer music, meditation music, oscillator rhythms. And I was like, "I like that. Can I have some more of those please?" So he sent out a bunch. Meanwhile, Douglas was out digging around, going on a road trip, and he brought back a bunch. And the next thing you knew we had six feet of these things, and I still have quite a few of them. This is pretty crude. This is J.D. Emmanuel, Wizards (1982).

[Shows record] This is an exciting one. It's beautiful. One of the things that was remarkable about this is that I was showing this to a friend, and I was like, "I really like this." And he was saying, "God damn, man, I hate that shit." And he turned it over and said, "Look at these guys. They're so fucking angry." And I

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was thinking, "You know what? You're right!" These guys, it's like they put so much energy into making this soothing music and all this stuff, and it's like this repressive thing. He was like, "Look at how angry that guy is." And it was just fascinating to me.

[Question] Was there any overlap between the designers? Like, the neon colors?

Yes, like these are from the same label, which is the Unity label in Corte Madera in Marin County. This was one label that did about ten or so records. Breathe (1977), Petals (1977), and Radiance (1977). So there is this kind of feeling that goes into these that is very different than Peter Davison, who did his own records, which were more basic. And then, of course, the Arica records all have the symbolism of the actual movement, so they are much more serious in their tone and are kind of institutional.

[Question] Who was doing them?

I don't know, but the Arica records—as you could see—whoever was designing it and doing everything that was associated with it was really something else. I think that Arica releases have the finest music, and the finest design, and the finest theatricality, and the finest stuff. And it doesn't credit a designer, which is this other idea of self. These musicians, they would all lay back, and nobody is going to play up over the music. It's all going to be pattern. It's all going to be a wash. It's never going to be somebody jumping in there and singing like the guy from AC/DC, or blowing a saxophone really loud. Everybody holds back and

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creates this very even thing to sort of extinguish the self. So, you don't see the designers, and you don't see everything come to the forefront. Everything is kind of tapered in this way. Which is very odd, because then the ideas behind it are always about trying to tend to the self: self-improvement, self-realization. There is this very strange conflation of the self and the non-self, or obliterating the ego.

[Question] Is there a date range or an end point for the genre?

I think that what you see in the '70s is all these things that can be loosely defined as being associated with New Age music, or meditation music, but I think—I don't know the exact date—probably around the time that Windham Hill started to become very commercial and Halpern started to sell a lot of records, which I imagine would be '78 or '79 or '80. Then, you have something that could properly be called New Age music, which is still this huge, huge genre of music.

The records are fun for me to bring, because they are very tactile and beautiful, but the CDs have most of the good content. Then, of course, there is always cassette, which is about as scarce as you can get, and a lot of the really nice items are on cassette, because it was a very popular format of the time. This one is called Running Free: Guided Imagery and Music by Emmett E. Miller, M.D. (1982). So, you want optimal performance, maximum enjoyment. You want to make the most out of life. That's really a lot of what it's about.

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[Question] Was Arica a movement and a band, or a music group playing together? Was there someone making the music and then a movement outside of that, too? Or, was everyone in the movement also involved in the music?

I think what would happen is you would have people join these movements, and they would happen to be fantastic musicians, and then they would record records. You know, there are a lot of records by L. Ron Hubbard that engage music. He was a pianist and he had this group, The Apollo Stars, and they played funk music, and it is really, really weird. But music, and literature, and art, and performance was always part of these groups, especially the ones that were really expansive, like Scientology, Synonym, Arica, and People's Temple.

I really like this. Now, for a lot of people who would like this kind of music, this is even just a little too candy-ass for them to get into. This is a really beautiful thing: Rhamanavarhænne Collection Vol. 1 (1979) by Thomas E. Dimock. This is from Ventura County, and I don't know if this is New Age music. It's just some guy tinkering on an organ with these little vignettes, and he makes this beautiful music. (Yes, you can take a picture of it, Douglas.)

[Question] What's the deal with the shrinkwrap? I am just kind of curious, in the world of collecting records what the status of it is.

I think you want it. Some people don't like it. I used to tear it away, actually. For you, it's probably obstructing the tactility of the object. This record is open, but it is in shrinkwrap.

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[Question] So, if it is in shrinkwrap it is of higher value?

Yes, if it has shrinkwrap, it is in a more pristine state, because you could strip it away and have an untouched jacket.

[Question] But if you don't strip it away?

That's the question of the sealed item. People would say, "Oh but it's sealed. But is it warped?" "Oh but it's sealed. Well, I'd rather not pay twice the price and have it open." "Oh but it's sealed. But I don't want to open it to listen to it." It's this quandary with the sealed item, which is another huge thing. But I would always open it, because I wanted to know what it was. You see this, and you think, "That could be the most psychedelic, fucked-up, insane shit." And you could open it and I could be some guy talking about some bullshit, like a sales program. You don't know what it is, because there is no real description.

[Question] Are there camps? If it is sealed, it is basically like a coin. You are like a coin collector, and it doesn't even matter. And then someone like you is a connoisseur of the content. Like an antiquarian: a real antiquarian doesn't read. What is the tension, or dialogue between those two positions?

A lot, I think. I think the real collectors, the real musicologists, and the real person who is an aficionado of rare, beautiful things, they want to know. They are connoisseurs of information, and they want to take it all in. And then there is some a-hole who wants to buy every single good one and just file it, and not even use it. So there is this kind of tension there, I think.

[Question] Does everyone know who those people are?

Yes. It's like the art world. There are artists who want to be participants, and who want to be informed, and who want to have a dialogue, and who want to be invited to speak, and who want to teach, and who want to be in the world, and who want to travel. And then there are artists who want money, or who

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want a hall pass. It's the same thing. If somebody has a lot of money they can buy every first edition jazz record, and they are all incredibly beautiful, and they have this insane sound system, a lucite turntable with a motor in the other room, and it's driven by an air pump. And then there are people who would rather have rare records than have all the finery. Or, there are people who like records that aren't necessarily worth a lot of money, but they just really enjoy the content. And those are real collectors—like these guys here.

We used to joke about it like art and wine storage. There is this term, "art and wine storage." There was this guy who worked for Atlantic. He was like the president of Atlantic Records, and he was this big collector—I can't even remember his name any more. He would buy only sealed items, and he would never open them. He had this huge collection, and people would ask, "Why did he have that?" Oh, it's like "art and wine storage." It's like a high-end thing. I don't really know how to wrap my head around it. I mean, essentially, these things [New Age records] are not valuable. They are rare, but if you had a chance to acquire one it would be $15, or $20, or $5. If this was some kind of music that was valuable music, like psychedelic rock music, or funk music, or jazz music, you would pay more. I always took pleasure in the fact that they weren't valuable, and you could still find them, and it was still enjoyable.

[Question] Do you think with the Private Issue New Age recording artists it was more about their own sort of self-therapy than actually making music to appeal to other people? Within the canon you are describing is there a title or artist that you think appealed to more people?

Steven Halpern. That was Halpern's intention, and that's how he marketed his music, and how people utilized his music. I honestly see it as a commercial genre, and I see that people who made New Age records wanted to be famous. They wanted to be George Winston. They wanted to be some asshole playing barefoot on an 8-foot Steinway. They wanted money. They wanted all of those things. It's just this peculiar genre of music. And I think that really

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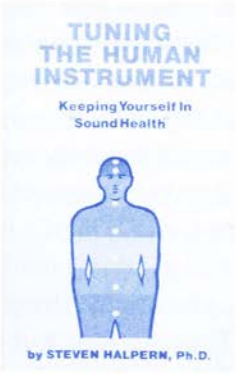
stems out of that insulting rant that I went on when I started about the "me" generation, the "self" generation, which is this ideal that goes from the 1960s, through the 70s, into the '80s—and it is '80s music. I think the prime years for New Age music are '80–'84, or '85, and that's when you get the most items and the most permutations.

[Question] So, Halpern is sort of the figurehead of the genre?



Yes, Halpern was probably the most well known. He wrote two books. He wrote a book in 1978 (Tuning the Human Instrument: Keeping Yourself in "Sound Health") and a book in 1985 (Sound Health: The Music and Sounds That Make Us Whole) which laid out his ideas, and it was all very structured.

[Question] Do you think that people were hearing Halpern and were like, "Man, this has totally changed my life."

Halpern changed my life, dude. Really. He's really, really great.

[Question] Let's say you went to a contemporary New Age store and you looked at their CD collection. If you are talking about a kind of cut-off point, or if you say there is this iconic figure in this field, is there a distinction between that and the music that I might hear when I go get a facial, for example? Whatever is available today, is there a connection to him? Is it any good?

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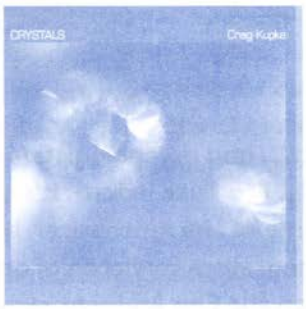
Well, I don't know. Consider the variants. You have this element which is taking from Celtic music, Eastern music, Indian music. And you have this element which is based in synth-scapes and pattern, this very calming kind of thing. Then you have the nature sounds: the brook, and the gulls, and the oceans. There are all these different approaches to dealing with it. So, when you go have a massage and you are listening to that—I don't know, because I don't know what it is like now—but I assume that it is like listening to some bad rock album that was produced last year. It's pastiche. It's mash-up. It's anything goes. Of course, like all people who love art or love music, you don't want to see someone do an emulation of Conceptual art from 1970. You want to see them change it or do something to it. I think that the finest stuff was in the beginning, when it wasn't quite so well-defined. Is this record an instrument for a human potential group to meditate to, or to do exercises to? Or, is this a commercial kind of thing? Or, is it for healing? Is it for relaxation? So, it very much is like literature and art. You want to listen to things when they are still vital. You don't want fourth-wave ska. You might want The Specials, but you might rather have Jamaican music. So, it's like that. The fine things are the things that are right on the cusp.



This is another guy that Douglas took me to see who lives up in Glendale, Craig Kupka. He's a high school music teacher out there. I first discovered his records from a series on Hoctor, which is a dance music label, called Modern Dance Environments, which was improvisational music that was set for a UCLA group that was doing modern dance in the late '70s. Then, Douglas

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discovered that he had these meditation kind of records. This is Clouds: New Music For Relaxation (1981) and this is Crystals: New Music For Relaxation 2 (1982), on the Folkways label, which some of you might be familiar with. Folkways was a label in New York that pressed a record a week for 40 years. So, they made 2,400 records or something, and the records varied from ethnic field recordings to Americana. This is kind of an unusual one.

[Question] I'm curious about the economic and technological backstory to this music. Especially with private-issue releases, I would think that because it is made with synthesizers at a time when they weren't readily available, and pressing your own records takes significant investment, a lot of the musicians and people who were creating this music were already successful in other fields. Were they all professional musicians, or were they dentists and real estate agents who were making this music on the side?

Dentists... and psychologists! I really don't know. This record, for example, is a flute record. It's a guy playing the flute. That's all it is. Some of the synthesizer-based records—those pieces of equipment were very special and rare. And this is the guy, if you've ever seen the Eno Ambient series Ambient 3: Day of Radiance (1980), this is Laraaji, before he went Laraaji, when he was called Edward Larry Gordon.

[Question] Within the subgenre is there a "Holy Grail," as it were?

No, not really. It's not that collectible. I wish it was. When my friend Will—Douglas and these guys know him—came to me four

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months ago and said, "Man, I want every New Age record you've got." I said, "Are you serious? This stuff is finally valuable? Great!" I started pulling it off the shelves, all of the things that I had from when I used to deal records. I still had some inventory. And then he said, "No, I just want it for myself. It's not valuable." And it was true. There are ones that are valuable. Like Arica records are valuable—they are $50, or $100—but most of them aren't.

[Question] Has any of this stuff been anthologized or reissued?

I think so. They have reissued some titles, right?

[Douglas McGowan of Yoga Records] I'm working on it. Soul Jazz is putting that out.

It will happen. It's really pleasurable. It's really great stuff. And as all of those people who wanted rare records, when they get old like me—I'm 40 now—now, they need the peaceful music. I don't need the free jazz, I don't need the punk rock. So, I think that people will come around to really enjoying it. Being scarce records and things of beauty, and things that have that personal quality, they are just as unusual and just as esoteric and as beautiful as anything else.

[Question] Where do you draw the line between Private Issue New Age and commercial New Age? You are talking about records that were only released on small labels. Are there some things that don't fall under P.I.N.A.?

I think that when somebody presses a record themselves—like this guy from Sacramento, Wilburn Burchette—he pressed these himself, and these are rare and desirable. He did this. This wasn't commercially distributed. He distributed it, most likely. But then these ones that I showed you from Marin County, this is an actual label called Rising Sun. So, this is in-between. Then you have Windham Hill, that kind of thing. They were bought by A&M, and then they were bought by BMG. They sold millions and millions of records, so it's not always so distinct.

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[Question] Can you talk a little bit more about how you got into collecting P.I.N.A.? Earlier you mentioned that one of the things that got you into it was the hunt for it. You talked about it as the last musical genre that didn't really have an audience or a collector's market for it.

I think it's interesting. For someone like myself, who used to do this all the time, I really enjoyed looking through huge piles of records that a million people had been through and trying to find things that were of merit in there, when all of the good ones were supposedly gone. I think that any time there was a known dealer, by probably 2005 or 2006, once Ebay was full blown and there were websites that cataloged the prices that things would go for at auction, you couldn't go back to a place and find rare ones unless you had a very special eye. And then came a group of people a little bit younger than me who were very good at finding things that were special that looked like shit. And that was kind of a thing, and it still is, I think. And I liked that, because I could still get these. I could buy them for $1 or $2, and it was still pleasurable, it was enjoyable. It wasn't like if I brought the record up to buy it somebody would freak out because they were worried it was valuable, or it had some longhair on the cover wailing on a guitar, or some guy with a huge afro so that they knew that it was "collectible." It really doesn't look like much, but I enjoy it. So, I like that, you know? Because it was still fun to look.

[Question] Do you have any insight—apart from the kids who were accessorizing ABC—why the Japanese market was so taken with certain obscure things, why they came to certain soft rock records, for example?

I don't know. They liked clothing. They liked station wagons. There was this guy, Hiroki, who used to come buy records, and he also bought station wagons. And he also had amazing clothes, and he also knew about furniture. I do remember one time, I was with some of these guys, and this guy had a t-shirt he had made that said: "We are five years ahead of you." There was this Japanese guy walking around wearing this t-shirt, and I was like, "Fuck,

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that's terrible!" It's so insulting, but let me put it this way: they got a lot of good shit in the '80s and '90s. I think it was largely economics. Their economy was incredibly strong, and a lot of the kids that were into this were the kids of industrialists, and the kids of businessmen. And for pleasure and for fun their idea would be to come to the States and just export shipping containers of this stuff. And still, today, if you want the finest records, you just go to Japan. They are all there. Everything you could imagine is there. I think in the culture of the States the average person doesn't appreciate a rare thing. They want a big screen, or a new car, or they want to go to Target and buy some plastic crap. There was something about the Japanese. They were very very into it, beyond the Europeans—way beyond.

[Shows book] Here, before we go, this is Suburbia Suite, and this was published all the time for 15 or 20 years. I don't know if they still make it. These were hard to get. I would get these from Hiro, but you could maybe get them at a Japanese bookstore. In these books is an intense cataloging of all kinds of things. And they weren't just going to the United States. They had the best Canadian records. They destroyed Brazil. You can't go to Brazil and find rare Brazilian records, and Bossa records, and Tropicália records. They had it all. This thing was top secret, like the really hardcore shit, where they just spelled it out. And some dealers would have this, and other dealers wouldn't, and then it would become a game. The Japanese really did create the genres and the desire for certain titles, and popularized certain titles. So, things that people know are good, they really loved them 15 or 20 years ago. They really have a real desire to collect.

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Playlist: Anthony Pearson

Edward Larry Gordon
Celestial Vibration LP
SWN Corp, 1978
"All Pervading"
"Bethlehem"

Steven Halpern
Spectrum Suite LP
Halpern Sounds, 1983
"Keynote C: Red"
"Keynote D: Orange"
"Keynote E: Yellow"
"Keynote F: Green"
"Keynote G: Blue"
"Keynote A: Indigo"
"Keynote B: Violet"
"Leviathan Blue"
"Sakura"
"Rainbows Of Life"
"Crystal Cathedral"
"Earthrise, Part 1"
"Earthrise, Part 2"
"Harmonic Convergence"

Larkin
Moments Empowered LP
Wind Sung Sounds, 1984
"From A Distance"
"Empowered"
"Al-one"
"Infinite Heart"
"Two Souls Dance"
"A Message"
"Brothers"

Arica
Audition LP
Self-released, 1972
"Absorption"
"Relaxation"
"Mentations"
"Passive in the World"
"Active in the World"
"Passive in the Cosmos"
"Active in the Cosmos"
"The Funnel"
"Absorption"
Mantram
"Calling"
"U-Toh"
"Wu-Well"
"Shutati-Shumawi"
"A-O"
"Ah-O"

JD Emmanuel
Wizards LP
North Star Productions, 1982
"Movement One"
"Movement Two"
"Movement Three"
"Movement Four"
"Movement Five"

Peter Davison
Music on the Way LP
Avocado Records, 1980
"Morning Meditation"
"Songs in the Wind"
"Summer"
"Selamat Siang"

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Thomas E. Dimock
Rhamanavarhænne Col. Vo. 1 LP
Rhamanavarhænne Records, 1979
"Song 3"
"Songs 4, 5, 6, 8"
"Songs 9, 11, 12, 18"
"Songs 13, 21, 26, 24"
"Songs 19, 22"
"Songs 23, 29, 28"
"Songs 31, 32"
"Songs 33, 34"
"Songs 36, 39, 40, 41"
"Song 7"

Bill Reddie
Starbody LP
Channel 1 Records, 1974
"Starbody Suite"
"A Uni-Chotometric Meditation"