

Greg Howard

ETHER ORE



live sonic expeditions on The Chapman Stick

Ether Ore - Mining the Heavens

Something magical happens when a performer takes the stage, abandons all preconceived notions, charts or plans and simply plays. This 'play' is creative abandon, spontaneous composition, exploration. This is improvisation.

At its best, musical improvisation is a game, almost a tennis match between player and audience. In his book *Improvising Jazz*, Jerry Coker writes that the listener tries to guess what's coming next. If the player always gives the audience what they're expecting they get bored. If they never hear what they think they're going to hear they get frustrated. So the improviser finds the balance that works. This is the very reason why the recordings offered here work so well for me. Just when I'm starting to think I know where Greg is going he grabs me by the ear and takes me somewhere else.

Improvisation is spontaneous composition under fire. Dangerous. Open, honest, exposing and impossible to fake. That's why I like it.

True improvisation offers the listener a rare glimpse into the head and heart of the performer. The listener is present with the creator at the moment of creation, the irretrievable moment when the intangible becomes real, communicated through sound.

Engaging, electric, inspiring, eclectic, angry, self-reflective, indulgent... It doesn't really matter, call these recordings all or none of the above. Improvisation only works when the artist is free to explore whatever path the music reveals. I have the feeling Greg wasn't trying to sound like anything while he was creating this music. I'll bet he was reacting, responding, listening, trusting, experiencing and enjoying the rare moments of insight that he can only express as his music. As listeners, that's about the best we could possibly ask for.

Jim Reilly,
Kamloops, BC, Canada,
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