

The Doctor Is In: An interview with Nancy Mroczek

by Marc Friedman

www.nancymroczek.com/music

Rock



Nancy Mroczek and I are sitting in the cafe section of a upscale, suburban natural food store. Her posture is graceful and her bearing is one of confidence. Her hand painted glasses hint at the artistic eye that is probably a great asset to her hobby of antiquing. They are also a great conversation piece as well as a mild source of embarrassment for this one time Parisian model and practicing doctor of psychology. She answers questions after a carefully measured pause. Her full responses, as short or as long as the inquiry requires, are always in a convivial, polite, and certain tone.

How did you get into music?

Always liked it. Always "meant to" sing and perform. I finally did.

You have a Ph.D. In what and from where?

I took Behavioral Psychology from the University of Minnesota and I did a post doc in neuropsych at Westwood Lodge in Mass.

How do the two pursuits affect each other?

I keep music out of psychology. As for music, the academic training or seriousness can't help but influence what I say and how I say it. The PhD part in music is meant to indicate a kind of general scholarlyness, which it is.

Who's in your band?

I won't say right now as there are currently personnel changes in the making.

I hear you are planning a CD, how is that going?

I did cut a four song CD which is available, but only through my website at the moment. I plan to have artwork, get it out to people, things like that.

Who performs on the CD?

The players were Kiyoko Arakawa, Masato Fujiwara, and Hiro Hiraiwa.

How did you choose the songs from your catalog for the CD?

I chose two relatively new songs, "Cultural Engineering" and "Wavelength", as well as "Rock This Joint" and "Hoochie Koochie". The latter is a signatory ode for animals used in research. I think the four songs are rather dissimilar in style.

How has your writing evolved since you started?

If I play with musicians, I get ideas, and then new songs or ideas of sound come out. There's a stimulus and then there has to be the opportunity to do the songs for people. My writing hopefully picks up some of a trend or new sounds I might hear as well as the effect of musicians who play music with me.

How do you write? What inspires you? What techniques do you use (i.e. tape recorder, sheet music, etc.)?

I author the music but I don't write music, per se. I hear the song in my head; I try to keep it in memory until I can sing the melody and rhythmic structure out for someone who can play it or I record the melody for musicians to hear and play.

Your online videos show you to be a dynamic performer. Do

you plan for that?

I feel like being whatever way I am acting; I don't particularly have a plan. Call it conviction, need, or passion to convey and the artist to be.

Jazz and hard rock are wildly different styles. How do you reconcile the two as a performer?

I love music. Tangentially, to a great extent, I feel the history of rock contains 20th century philosophy. Rock is to act meaning out, be, express, convey, get to the point, be direct; jazz is to sing as well or as artfully as one can. Technically, there are the sounds, chords, tempo, rhythm, and "changes" usually associated with jazz. Then there is soul...

Who are your jazz influences?

The many classic and some contemporary chanteuses for singing and the many excellent players for sound like Herbie Hancock, Joshua Redman, Wardell Gray, McCoy Tyner. The list is long.

My favorite jazzster is John Coltrane and I like the idea of certain experimental changes in any genre of music. What I do is sing standards and some "sort of" contemporary songs, as well as certain songs of my own, in a standard-ish kind of way -- just trying to do my best with it. It's fun. It's with experience that ability and style can emerge. As in rock, it's a whole thing to get out there, get gigs, etc.

Who are your rock influences?

I don't know who influenced me but I have loved and liked so many bands and people in rock over the years - sometimes in general and sometimes for certain songs. I have been extremely fond of dance music from the '70s on - again certain songs - the beat (not a lot of the conventionally thought of disco). In rock I have liked the Rolling Stones to Nirvana to Kid Rock, Neil Young, Shreikback, Talk Talk, Blink 182, Guns 'N Roses, Velvet Revolver, Sex Pistols, Devo, Staind, Pink, Lou Reed, Siouxsie and other females whose names I can't recall. I've heard, certain rap - early Douggy Fresh, early EMF, was it? "To the Bridge" - I used to like evolving rap, especially the rhythms, on and on and on. (Also) Chet Atkins, Patsy Cline, Anne Murray, Madonna, etc. So, so many. Especially songs. There are so many I hear now whose name I don't know but I like the sound - also some very heavy "dragging" or "droning" metal, certain Jean Michel Jarre, the German group with a name something like Eibnetzhausen or some such. The list is long and I can't bring a lot of names to mind.

Tell me about your TV show.

Phew. I've said too much already. I do all kinds of deep, non-commercial, but non-dull, and highly pertinent, scholarly done, delivered practical, topics. I'm heavy on environment and most of all on trying to put in a word for animals and absolutely against any research using animals. I don't care that much for research itself either. I think that we've gone research crazy and the cause of human evolution into kinder beasts remains very mildly improved as best I can tell and wanting. My website contains a list of many shows I've done where topics range from learning as a lay person about radiation to Afghanistan before the wars to behaviorism to psychoanalytic thought to constitutional freedoms to genetic engineering. It could be anything and it ain't what you're going to get on corporate TV but it's also not throw the baby out with the bath water slanted. I also add some of my performances to the show.

What are your plans for the future?

Don't have a "plan," really, per se. I would like to do music and performing much more. Sometimes I sing jazz and other songs in other settings too.