

The Nabokov Project

Born of the eclectic heart & spirit of classical music & garage guitar-molded by contempt for 'pop' & all things overly contrived & commodified

Formed in the shadows of UWEC in the mid-nineties, the Nabokov Project has no set membership or contributors. It's most recent incarnation has included the membership of Dave Pollock (spoken-word vocals), Ted Leslie (percussion), Thea Morton (cello, guitar, and keys), and M. W. Gargo (vocals, guitar, computer, and keys). Ted Leslie, however, after the start of the collaboration developed brain cancer and has since died. His illness and death put this version of the band on hold permanently. With the graduation of Gargo, it has now moved east and has begun again in Pittsburgh, PA. Their first effort, "Effete Coquette," was dreamed and recorded over three years in the living room and closet of an upstairs apartment in Eau Claire, WI (at 327 Hudson St # 3) and in one room in the north part of the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh. With the move, the project's current membership is limited to Gargo alone, who took the time to answer some questions.

V1: Tell me about your connection to Eau Claire. Is there anyone connected to the project still living in here?

M.W.G: I was an undergraduate at UWEC from 1995-2000 and a creative writing student. Thea Morton lives in EC. She is in the band Kip. Dave Pollock moved from Eau Claire to St. Paul. Ted Leslie got cancer and the full band version of the project went on hold before we even played our first real show. We couldn't bear to replace him as he was dying. If I had a studio, I guess you'd say this was a "studio" project- for now...

How would you describe your sound?

I guess I'd describe my sound as anti-pop if not generally "unconventional." I'm trying to play with different musical forms with the idea that maybe one should attempt something new instead of endlessly repeating the same thing over ad infinitum as is a feature of much music these days.

What are you currently working on?

I'm currently working on a new EP of songs I've written since May 2000. It's mostly acoustic, alt-folk stuff. I wanted to have it recorded and out by January, but I haven't had the time to get to it. The EP (when released) will contain the songs "Glengarry Leads," "Le Voix Humane," "Girl on a Bus," and "Musings on Tragedy."

Influences. Who and why? On your website, you mention David Lynch and Karl Marx as influences, are they influences on you personally or on your music?

Well, I consider my intellectual genealogy to come from various forms of Marxism, Frankfurt School "critical theory," and psychoanalysis. I would say that these intellectual "areas" kind of form the way I understand, view, and relate to the world at large and, therefore, I would have to say that they influence the ideas I bring to song writing as well. I would also have to admit that I'm very much a classically inspired songwriter. My first instrument was the violin when I was seven. I was a classically trained violinist and learned guitar by extrapolating what I'd learned

on violin. (Which does and doesn't translate...) I took music theory classes in high school and would say that this training and background is always present in some part of my consciousness and informs the way I approach music even when I'm trying to work against it.

Why did you move to Pittsburgh? How has that changed the project?

I moved to Pittsburgh for school. I'm a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh working towards an M.A. in Critical and Cultural Studies. I'm also a Teaching Assistant. I get to teach freshman college students how to write complete sentences and talk about ideology in film. The move has given my music - and project - a sense of otherness, distance, and loss. I have no friends or family native to Pennsylvania and the distance/loneliness/desperation? gives me new approaches to song writing that I didn't have as a person within a comfortable set of relations.

What's the biggest obstacle to get where you want the project to be, musically or otherwise?

The biggest obstacle has to be money and technology. Getting music into a form that can be distributed takes a considerable amount of technology and money, neither of which grows on trees...as the cliché goes...

What kind of music are you currently listening to?

I listen to a lot of Radiohead (Kid A, Amnesiac), Sarah Dougher, Star Sutra, Sigur Ros, Gang of Four, and I've just begun to really like that Strokes album (even though it appears that the mainstream has decided this album is "worth" putting into maximum rotation on "alternative" radio stations and MTV in which case some people may feel that it's no longer "cool" to like this band...)

Where can someone get your CD?

"Effete Coquette" is currently available through the web at Amazon.com and Ampcast.com.

Okay, so 'Effete' means no longer fertile, and a 'Coquette' is a woman who endeavors without sincerity to gain attention and admiration from men. So the title of your first record is basically: "Barren Slut"? Why did you choose that as the title?

The title is an allusion to the in-joke of "Nabokov Project" and a play on the idea of the "coquette" from Nabokov's "Lolita."

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Band site: www.theNabokovProject.com
Mp3 sites: www.mp3.com/theNabokovProject,
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