

ENTERTAINMENT

C-K MUSIC REVIEW: Professor Perritt's Pack of Punchy Prose

By MICHELLE KOETH, 2L

I write mostly "happy music" dealing with themes of aesthetics, nature and peacefulness. Recently I've co-written a track called "Island" about a fabled island in Brazil where love is said to have originated. Despite this seemingly Pollyanna-ish theme to music, I write this way only because I have been fortunate to have lived a mostly comfortable and peaceful life, and so these concepts are most familiar to me.

Therefore, like so many other people, I imagine, when I am faced with the terrible images of war, destruction, poverty and death quite a poignant response follows. We are at once sobered from our innocence, and filled with dismay that perhaps the world cannot be as perfect as our less earthly selves would like to imagine. Sometimes it's not an image that we see on TV, but rather, actually meeting people who have witnessed and experienced the terrors of war, and heard their accounts first hand.

Enter Professor Perritt, former Dean at Chicago-Kent and organizer of Operation Kosovo, which has involved many Chicago-Kent students in nation-building in the Balkans. Perritt has had the unique opportunity to speak with members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) as part of the research for a book he is writing on the KLA. Fusing his inspiration from the personal anecdotes of war and a background in music including clarinet and piano, Perritt, under some tutelage from 2L Andrew Strong, decided to funnel his emotions into art and wrote the song "Fire for the Colors."

Professor Perritt did not stop after writing his track; he then assembled a small band to record the song including 3L Matt Topic playing trumpet. After writing "Fire," Perritt has been developing his new found interest in writing music and has a few more projects under development.

For this edition, I reviewed two of Perritt's songs, "Fire," and a sketch recording of a fresh new track called "Back of the Room." I listened to both tracks first before



doing a review because I was curious if Perritt was trying to establish himself as a political songwriter; something he could certainly pursue given the insight shown in his "Fire" track. Instead, Perritt has not limited himself to any one theme in his songwriting, being more like an unscripted philosopher who observes, analyzes and then reports on different things that occur in his life. This conclusion is easily reached when you consider Professor Perritt's diverse background including engineering as well as politics and law.

Both of Perritt's tracks show great strength and craft in the lyrics and vocal melodies. For "Fire," the vocalist, Tim Sandusky, sings in a very depressed and solemn tone starting out the track with the lyrics "My grandmother and baby sister both are dead." The whole tone of the song is meant to be morose and dark, but subtly runs through moods of resilience, pride, strength and humility throughout the vers-

es conveying the complex and intricate palate of emotions felt by the soldiers of the KLA.

The chorus contrasts with the solemn verses by breaking into a rousing riff that Perritt says was inspired from the Albanian national anthem. It is proud and anthem-like with a military snare drum beat and has a formal, structured feel to it in contrast to the sad, downtrodden verses describing the chaos of war and a defeatist emotion towards the war.

I was very impressed by the arrangement and lyrics of "Fire." From the lyrics which progress through despair and hopelessness to a never ending resolve, to the structure of the lyrics which are sung in a sad, almost fragile voice in the beginning, to layered harmonies with a stronger voice near the end, Perritt has given great thought to "Fire." Topic's trumpet part, sounding like a bugle boy in the army, complements the track perfectly in the sec-

tion of the piece focusing on the army's resolve and determination.

Perritt continues his insightful songwriting on the other track I reviewed, "Back of the Room." Still a work in progress, "Room" has a lot of potential. Perritt has been recently working with 2Ls Matthew Bloom and Ben Shanbaum on his recent work. "Room" starts out immediately with a catchy verse that has a very folksy feel to it: "I haven't seen you for a while. You look sad. Come sit with me, and give me your smile." The same vocalist who sings for the "Fire" track also sings for "Room" in a similar dark, thoughtful style. Perritt tells me that he has plans to expand the vocals to include multiple vocalists in a conversational style, which will suit the sweet and simple theme of this song well.

"Room" treats a theme that Perritt plans to develop on in the future – that of law school experiences. The lyrics of "Room" start out with a "classroom participant" describing his experiences of alienation in the back of the room, but ends on a happy note with the person finally overcoming his apathy and sadness to become more engaged with what's going on in the classroom. Perhaps Perritt seeks to draw an analogy between the back of the classroom and people who feel disenfranchised with life in general, and his role as the professor extended outside the classroom to help others bloom and become enlightened.

As a songwriter, Perritt definitely meets this goal by bringing his interesting insights of his life experience to song. Moreover, Perritt claims that he finds himself in a refreshing role reversal in learning from his students how to develop himself as a songwriter. Thanks again to Professor Perritt for sharing his unique collaborative art, a true product of Chicago-Kent talent. I look forward to his future releases. If you are interested in hearing Professor Perritt's "Fire for the Colors," please be sure to email me at mkoeth@kentlaw.edu. ■