

NEWS RELEASE

Contacts: Ann Braithwaite (print) Kate Smith Promotions (radio)
(781) 259-9600 (814) 482-0010
ann@bkmusicpr.com katesmithpromotions.kate@gmail.com

On the heels of its highly-acclaimed debut CD, *The Unforgettable Sounds of Esquivel*, Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica returns, this time with its vibraphone quartet album, *Third River Rangoon*

Brian "Mr. Ho" O'Neill's *Exotica for Modern Living* series continues
with the world's first collection of third-stream exotica

An original and modern exploration of chamber, jazz, classical, and world sounds inspired by the escapism of the 1950s exotica genre, led by composer, vibraphonist, and multi-percussionist Brian "Mr. Ho" O'Neill

Featuring Albanian flute and bass flute specialist Geni Skendo, Japanese percussionist Noriko Terada (Flangia, Women of the World), bassist Jason Davis (Earthsound), & special guest Tev Stevig (Kafana, Klezwoods) on oud

"...a marvelously flexible unit..."
—Jonathan Perry, *Boston Globe*

"...if John Zorn is an exotica Picasso, O'Neill is his Georges Braque...as Braque may have been the finer cubist, O'Neill may be, in the long run, a stronger exotica than Zorn."
—Gordon Marshall, *AllAboutJazz*

Editor's Pick. 4 stars. "...incredible arrangements, musicianship, and artistic direction." —Frank Alkyer, *Downbeat*
(about Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica's 2010 big-band album, *The Unforgettable Sounds of Esquivel*)

Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica, the world's only ensemble dedicated to original third-stream exotica and the space-age pop music of Juan Garcia Esquivel, releases *Third River Rangoon*, its debut small-group recording, on May 31, 2011. This unique collection of works was recorded live at Futura Productions in Roslindale, MA, and was produced by exotica music authority Brother Cleve (Del Fuegos, Combustible Edison, Jetset DJ) and Mr. Ho. The result is a collage of exotic chamber music where the pre-concert lectures and post-concert meet-and-greets come with Zombies and Mai Tais instead of champagne, the concert hall is a Saarinen-modern, and the listener enjoys it all from the comfort of the latest Eames chair. (On the way out, insert your parking ticket into the tiki statue's mouth to exit the garage).

Mr. Ho's 2010 debut big-band release, *The Unforgettable Sounds of Esquivel*, was a Top Pick by *AllAboutJazz*, a 4-star review by the *Sunday Times* of London, and is currently playing in thousands of Starbucks stores worldwide. *Third River Rangoon* takes the *Exotica for Modern Living* series in a quieter, more introspective direction with eight new compositions by Mr. Ho that draw from the Italian *tammurriata*, Albanian drone singing ("Phoenix ,Goodbye"), the "Allegretto" from Shostakovich's 10th symphony ("Moai Thief"), the Bulgarian *kopanitsa* ("Autumn Digging Dance"), and naturally, a song about the 20-foot-tall stone sentry at the former Aku-Aku restaurant in Cambridge, MA, that is now dressed up as a sad Gloucester fisherman ("Lonesome Aku of Alewife"). The album's title, *Third River Rangoon*, is a play on Gunther Schuller's third-stream music construct that allows blending of jazz and classical ideas, and the Rangoon, a not-so-authentic-but-comforting American



Chinese dumpling. Together these two images suggest an uncharted, mysterious riverboat journey through music that explores multiple idioms in depth (without forgetting to be fun and sinfully delicious).

No exotica album would be complete without references to a semi-mythic past. While the album wouldn't be mistaken for a 1950s Martin Denny record, *Third River Rangoon* will satisfy hardcore exotica fans with hints of the South Pacific, Caribbean, and the numerous uncharted territories of tiki. Spicing up the recording are new arrangements of works from an unlikely troika of composers: Milt Raskin, Cal Tjader, and Pyotr Ilitch Tchaikovsky (yep!).

"Maika," originally found on Milt Raskin's album *KAPU*, brings listeners back to exotic 1959 with beautiful, bird-like flute playing by Geni Skendo. (Both Milt and Geni graduated from New England Conservatory—70 years apart.) Cal Tjader, the popular Latin-jazz vibraphonist, wrote "Colorado Waltz," an uptempo 6/8 selection featuring solos by Skendo, O'Neill on vibraphone, and Terada on cajon. Rounding out the non-original tracks is O'Neill's arrangement of "Arab Dance" from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, which (finally) features an actual Arabic instrument: the oud. Arguably bringing Tchaikovsky's "coffee dance" a step closer to authenticity, Tev Stevig—perhaps the top polymath in the Boston "guitar-like instruments" scene—adds a hauntingly beautiful solo on this instrument while providing harmonic support during the rest of the arrangement. Earlier Stevig appears on the 11/8 Bulgarian-infused "Autumn Digging Dance," named for the fall harvest dance known as the *kopanitsa*. His oud solo is framed with percussion by both Terada and O'Neill, the latter of whom adds the booming Balkan *tappan* drum and *riq* (Arabic tambourine) throughout. (Stevig actually introduced O'Neill to Bulgarian rhythms while performing together in their original Balkan-jazz ensemble, *Kafana*).

O'Neill's original "Thor's Arrival," is a bongo-laden tone poem inspired by *Kon-Tiki*, Thor Heyerdahl's epic 1947 account of a raft ride from Peru to Rarotonga in French Polynesia, in which he proved that a raft made of materials and constructed with indigenous South American techniques could have made the 4,300-mile ocean crossing. While Heyerdahl's goal was to show that the peoples of the South Pacific may have had South American roots, O'Neill's was to provide a nice soloing framework for Skendo's bass flute and his own vibraphone without toppling the musical vessel upon landing. "Phoenix, Goodbye" is perhaps the "reverie-scape" that *AllAboutJazz's* Gordon Marshall refers to in his review, and musically depicts the rebirth cycle of the Phoenix bird. (It also subtly refers to O'Neill's departure from his native Arizona.) "Phoenix," which opens with O'Neill's lap-style *bodhran* and Skendo's flute, displays a panoply of influences, sounds, and forms: the cantor/choir call-and-response section is based on Albanian (Tosk) iso-polyphonic singing with the drone portions appropriately executed by Davis and Skendo on arco bass and flute. The time is marked by O'Neill's Italian *tammorra*, an 18-inch tambourine. Minimalist ideas, à la Philip Glass and John Adams, inspire the dual-meter coda that ends the piece. Closing out the album is "Lyman '59," a tribute to Arthur Lyman, who was perhaps the most famous exotica vibraphone player. This peaceful lullaby-like composition evokes *haole* images of the South Pacific that delicately float from left to right across the stereo field and oh-so-gently remind the listener to check that last email from Expedia about Hawaiian vacation packages.

Concerts:

- Fri, June 3 @ 8pm: Lizard Lounge: Boston, MA: CD RELEASE (quartet)
- Sat, June 18 @ 8:30pm: Otto's Shrunk Head: NYC: CD RELEASE (quartet)
- Sat, July 16 @ 8pm: Barbés: Brooklyn, NY: (quartet)
- Fri, July 29 @ 8:30pm: Lily Pad, MA (quartet)
- Sat, August 27 @ 7:30pm: Artsquest Musikfest Cafe, Bethlehem, PA (Esquivel big band)

Other "Exotica for Modern Living" album releases:

The Unforgettable Sounds of Esquivel (Nov. 2010) – <http://orcheströtica.com/album>

Mr. Ho's Orcheströtica is two ensembles: in addition to the third-steam exotica quartet, a big band—with over 20 musicians—performs the world's only extant transcriptions of Mexican lounge king Juan Garcia Esquivel's space-age pop arrangements. Orcheströtica.com • Facebook.com/orcheströtica • Twitter.com/orcheströtica

Quick-listen @ <http://orcheströtica.com/album2> Quartet page @ <http://orcheströtica.com/tiki>