

Rustic Dub and Reggae on Kalimba

Contemporary Rustic Art 2018

In this work a music CD is to be created during 2018 using an African Kalimba. Recorded live on a digital minidisc in an ancient Northumberland woodland the music is improvised and totally original. Each track has a very basic dub/reggae structure upon which an infinite number of unique variations are played out. The Kalimba is a hand held traditional instrument and is widespread throughout Africa and often described as the 'finger piano'. The particular instrument I use was made in South Africa and consists of metal keys that are tuned to the key of B and plucked above a basic soundboard.

As a classic 'baby boomer' I was born into a north east working class family and brought up on a council estate of 'low horizons' and left school with no qualifications. But this expected 'low horizon' life journey radically changed direction as I came of age in the 60's and was swept up in the heady mix flower power, world music, hippydom, Eastern religion and recreational drugs. Out forever went my future as a predictably steady apprenticeship and the promise of a factory job for life. Instead, in came drugs, destiny and an evangelical belief in the good life as dedicated to a creative and alternative hippy lifestyle.

For most the hippy revolution proved to be a transient fashion and lifestyle choice for the post-war middle class baby boomer generation. Benefitting from free education, a generous welfare state and cheap housing these baby boomers soon went on to become the greedy consumer generation we see today. But for a working class minority in the North East, like me, the somewhat cheesy hippydom of the flower power era really was a cultural revolution in the head and a positive life changing event.

Musically, the roots of this music begin deep down in the 1960's with the birth of reggae, ska and dub and the eventual arrival of world music in the drab 'Get Carter' North East of England. Here we have the Calypso of Lord Kitchener, the Rastafarianism of Bob Marley. Then we have the Oud music of the Middle East, the sitar music of India, the Gamelan music of South Asia and the lute music of China that became available on vinyl.

During 2018 a four track CD will rehearsed, recorded and packaged. Each track will be around ten minutes long and recorded live in an ancient Northumberland wood and completed in one improvised take. The completed CD is intended to be an eclectic mix of ritual, dance, mindfulness and rustic vibe.

George French