

Disley calls it luck; others say it's talent, perseverance

BY PAUL FREEMAN

For the Daily News

Terry Disley repeatedly refers to himself as "lucky." Fact is, he has earned acclaim through talent, perseverance and integrity.

In his hometown, London, Disley was music director for Dave Stewart (Eurythmics) and played in sessions with Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger, Bryan Ferry, Brian Wilson, Van Morrison, Tom Jones and Bon Jovi.

In 1997, he decided to the U.S. where he sensed a greater appreciation for his passion — jazz.

"I realized I wanted to have my own group, write all the music myself and just do my own thing," he told The Daily News.

He had played the Fillmore with ska band Madness and Great American Music Hall with Acoustic Alchemy. "I decided to move here."

Top Bay Area musicians were eager to collaborate with Disley. "I'm really lucky, I had a fantastic group of people on the new record."

His latest release, "West Coast Jazz Impressions," brims with sparkling compositions, inspiringly performed.

Tunes often come to Disley in dreams.

"I used to wake up in the middle of the night and think, 'Wow, that's a great tune! Who wrote that?' Then I'd realize it was me. I'd fall out of bed, get the music paper and write it all down."

At Little Fox on Sunday, Disley and his seven-piece band (featuring guitarist Lorn Leber) will play the new material, as well as tunes from previous albums.

He began playing piano at age 8. His teacher founded a government-funded music school in London for underprivileged kids. Disley attended from age of 10 to 16.

"I was exposed to a lot of music and I was infatuated. Couldn't get enough of it. At home, TV wasn't on so much. Everyone played a bit of piano. So I grew up with that live music thing being part of my life."

Jazz stole his heart.

"In England, jazz is a

real minority thing, you don't really get to hear it. But I was lucky. When I was 11, at that music school, a couple of older kids took me to see Oscar Peterson. ...

"It's such a fascinating process to be able to improvise. I would be bored if I were a classical recitalist. It's liberating to be able to sit down and just go anywhere. No restrictions."



TERRY DISLEY

Disley became a regular at London's renowned jazz club, Ronnie Scott's. He opened for such legends as McCoy Tyner and Miles Davis. "An amazing time. We soaked up everything that came from America, jazz-wise."

Joining Acoustic Alchemy brought a taste of success. The

British group was an early practitioner of smooth jazz.

Disley's versatility enabled him to venture into the pop world, collaborating with musician/songwriter/producer Dave Stewart. This led to work on film soundtracks and albums.

Disley played at George Harrison's 52nd birthday party.

"You can't sit around thinking, 'Oh, my God, it's Mick Jagger! I'm in a session with him!' You've just got to get in there and do it. In the end, they're all people, aren't they? It's just the work, the promotion and publicity that makes us think they're beyond that. ...

Terry Disley

Solo piano: Miramar Beach Restaurant 131 Mirada Road, Half Moon Bay

When: 5:30 p.m. Saturday

Information: 650-726-9053

Solo Piano Brunch: Miramar Beach Restaurant 131 Mirada Road, Half Moon Bay

When: 11 a.m. Sunday

Information: 650-726-9053

'Big' Experience: Little Fox, 2223 Broadway, Redwood City

When: 7 p.m. Sunday

Tickets: \$15-\$17; 650-369-4119 or foxdream.com

Solo Piano Mondays: Sheba Lounge, 1419 Fillmore St., San Francisco

When: 7 p.m. Monday

Reservations: 415-440-7414

Experience: Shanghai1930, 133 Steuart St., San Francisco

When: 7:30 p.m. June 19

Reservations: 415-896-5600

His web site: terrydisley.com

"It was fantastic to be able to say you did it. But it wasn't really what I was into, musically. In the end, it was a bit frustrating, because I couldn't use the facility I've got on the instrument very much."

These days, in addition to playing Yoshi's, Shanghai 1930 and the Little Fox with his band, he plays solo at Half Moon Bay's Miramar Beach Restaurant and at San Francisco's Sheba Lounge.

"It's a challenge to make solo something beyond being just background. The good thing about low-profile gigs is that you can try things out on an audience and see what does and doesn't work. All the tracks on the new album have been tested."

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» CULTURE SHLOCK

News flash: Newspapers in world of financial hurt

It would be difficult to pinpoint the precise moment when it dawned on me that the newspaper industry was truly in need of saving, but if I had to guess, I'd say it was probably right around when I



MALCOLM FLESCHER

received word that my column was going to be cut from a weekly to a biweekly. "This is an outrage!" I shouted at my editor, even though I got the news via e-mail. "The American newspaper must be saved! Or, failing that, how about my column?"

Of course, I'm not alone in neglecting to see the handwriting on the wall — or, in this case, on the Internet. For years, we in the newspaper industry have been lulled into a false sense of how indispensable our product is. Poring over rapidly declining circulation figures and flatlining ad sales portending our doom, we've wondered, incredulous, "What would the public do without us — without our riveting stories featuring eye-grabbing headlines such as "Budget Debate May Soon Reach Impasse," without our instructions on who to vote for in the upcoming special election for interim sewer commissioner, without our horoscopes advising Scorpios that they need to watch out for a mysterious "Libra man" who'll soon be coming into their lives?"

But the sad reality is that the print newspaper, as we know it, may before long join such other vestiges of a romantic but distant past as the horse and buggy, ticker-tape machines, vinyl records and adult movie theaters.

Which is not to say that I've been twiddling my thumbs while newspapers have been slowly dying. It's just that most of my suggestions to save newspapers have fallen on deaf ears, including my idea to launch a worldwide papier mache craze, my recommendation that every American adopt a pet bird, and the rumor I started that exposure to Styrofoam packing peanuts renders people sterile. The only idea that garnered any attention at all was my suggestion that newspapers could recoup a significant portion of our recent losses by laundering money for Colombian drug lords, but that "attention" came primarily in the form of a rather unpleasant visit from some humorless representatives of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The crux of the problem newspapers face is that, while our product remains popular, readers are increasingly accessing their news content online (or, as we prefer to say, "stealing" it). However, online advertising revenues are significantly lower than the rates we charge for running ads in

the printed version.

And while some publishers have been mulling ways to finagle readers into paying for reading news stories online, a few others have broached the possibility of an entirely new business model.

"What if we just got rid of all the ads?" these industry executives have been heard to inquire. "If we just produced newspapers filled with our usual content, but funded entirely through subscriptions? Sure, it would cost more — a lot more, but people are always complaining about too many ads in the paper as it is, and this way they'd get only what they wanted. People might be willing to pay extra for that, wouldn't they? Wouldn't they?" Then these publishers wave goodbye to the gnomes, leprechauns, unicorns and other fantasy creatures that also reside in this imaginary world and go back to grousing under their breath about Google, Craigslist and "those %#\$% bloggers."

Admittedly, much as we in the industry like to assign blame for declining readership, there's no real use in pointing fingers. Not even if we can be reasonably sure that the responsibility lies primarily with young people who, as a generation, have abandoned the daily newspaper subscription, perhaps owing to the fact that anyone under the age of 25 seems to believe that everything from television, music and movies to cell-phone service and college education should be free, and that the only thing worth paying actual money for is to satisfy their bizarre predilection for finding new, highly sensitive body parts to have tattooed, pierced or both.

And why wouldn't younger folks want to read newspapers, what with our frequent hard-hitting opinion pieces decrying the younger generation's educational shortcomings, slovenly style of dress, cavalier attitude toward drug use, risky sexual behavior, bad driving habits and overuse of the word "like"? Why, one ignorant newspaper columnist even recently accused young people of an unhealthy interest in tattoos and piercings. What young person wouldn't want to pay \$100 a year to have all that delivered to their doorstep every morning?

So the question remains: can anything be done to save newspapers before they all disappear? Maybe. In fact, I read something encouraging in today's paper that gave me hope that positive change may be right around the corner. I can't reveal too much, except to say that a Gemini may be involved.

If you can't tolerate waiting two weeks between Malcolm's columns, e-mail him at Malcolm@CultureShlock.com and he will recommend a good psychiatrist.