

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2003

A voice from the past

Family helping former musician Tony Scheuren find fame posthumously

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They're known as recording studio auteurs, a certain breed of usually rock or pop musician who endeavors to become a multi-functional, one-man production team in any given recording project, often playing all instruments and performing all vocals as well as handling all writing, composing, production and mixing work themselves in home-built studios.

Some of the more famous of these characters include Brian Wilson, Todd Rundgren, Stevie Wonder and Lindsay Buckingham along with a growing number of self-styled studio hermits of the current generation such as Moby.

On a more obscure level, another such independent home-studio wizard resided in Hingham until a decade ago. Tony Scheuren, a former

music/show-biz professional, spent most of his free hours when not supporting himself at various occupations as a carpenter, lobsterman, freelance videographer — tucked away in his own self-built studio at his house overlooking the waterfront in Hingham's Crow Point, where he created a virtual musical universe. Scheuren produced over some fifteen years boxloads of home-made tapes of original music all self-performed on vocals, guitars, keyboards, bass and drums. Most of it was in a reflective, folk and jazz-influenced singer/songwriter style comparable to James Taylor, Michael McDonald

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and younger such artists as David Gray. Scheuren died of alcoholism at age 45 in 1993. Recently, the late singer/musician's sister, Margot Scheuren, and her husband, Ron Martinez, both of Mansfield, have launched a long-term series of projects dedicated to keeping her brother's music and memory alive through their Web sites at wham-records.com and beaconagency.com. The

first of these, a Tony Scheuren CD titled "Gaining On You," has just gained national distribution and is currently available at amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com with shipping for online and storefront retail set for May 6.

Through his family's efforts, Tony Scheuren may find his place as another fabled musical archetype, the creative artist more recognized in death than in life. "When Tony passed away, he left behind a trunk filled with lyrics to more than 140 songs and boxes with nearly 200 reel-to-reel tapes here in the basement," said Margot Scheuren from her brother's old Hingham house which still contains remnants of his home-studio, tapes, notes and equipment. "These tapes contain more than 50 songs that Tony wrote, arranged and home recorded on multi-track. There's easily enough material here for two or three more CDs, at least. 36 more songs that can be mastered,

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"Many people from around the country have already purchased copies of the first CD or expressed interest in it through our Web sites, and it's been very heartening with the responses we've had from many of them. People have e-mailed or called to tell us that they've been really touched by Tony's music. We felt from the beginning when we undertook this project that Tony's music had a certain inviting and sometimes spiritual quality that could connect with people," Scheuren said.

As a former music-biz pro, Tony Scheuren's name and work is familiar to more than a few rock and hip-culture fans of the 1960s and 70s. Particularly in the Boston area, where in the 60s Scheuren was a member of two of the city's hippie-era, psychedelic bands, Chamaeleon (sic) Church and Ultimate Spinach. These bands were both part of what was then known as The Bosstown Sound, which actually became a rather infra-

mous marketing scam by MGM records that is much better detailed in print elsewhere.

What the bands also had in common was future national celebrity members: Chamaeleon Church boasted none other than a pre-Saturday Night Live Chevy Chase on drums, while Ultimate Spinach more notably included on guitar Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, who moved on to guitar-hero fame with the Doobie Brothers, Steely Dan and as a session player in the 70s.

Scheuren kept in touch with Chase and in the early 70s rejoined him and the likes of John Belushi, Gilda Radner and Bill Murray in the crew of the then very irreverent and cutting Broadway stage shows and Radio Hour. Scheuren's special-ty with Lampoon was song parodies of the era's rock and pop stars, such as his most noteworthy — hilarious, stinging send-ups of James Taylor ("Methodone Maintenance Man") and Neil Young ("Southern California Brings Me Down"). The infamous Taylor spoof is currently

honored by being played daily on the *Imus In the Morning* show. Margot Scheuren and her husband are looking into the prospects of reissuing her brother's 60s Boston band and 70s Lampoon recordings on CD for online and retail availability as well.

Said Scheuren, "Tony just had a natural ability as a musician. He began playing guitar and banjo early on and grew up on The Kingston Trio and Everly Brothers harmonies. And he had an amazing ability to just listen to those styles and immediately pick out the melodies and vocals and start playing and singing them. Later when he began listening to the Beatles, he could just walk right over to an instrument and start playing their songs. There was also a genuine warmth to him as a person that I think comes out on these tapes of his original songs, and it's our commitment to get them out into the market and heard by the public."



Ten years after his death, musician and producer Tony Scheuren of Hingham is finding fame and new fans thanks to the efforts of his family.