

Miles in Scotland

Nothing quite makes a cold, windy and wet autumnal day spring alive like putting on Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2 in E minor all the while enduring a whipsaw of a litany of life's invisible pins and needles jabbing and mercilessly thrusting into your space, wellbeing and feeble attempts at maintaining a modicum of peace. Go ahead and listen but make sure no loaded Glockes are at the side, sitting still on the ready. Tequila, or worse — Mezcal with a drunken worm in a suspended stupor — has a strange way of lubricating trigger mechanisms. I am certain lives, many unknown when reports were later written, gave up the ghost by their own hand under the influence of this peculiar piece especially while inebriated. That fact has been missed, quietly overlooked, upon fatal inspections. The examiners later just thought it was cheap music, vinyl or otherwise, whatever — just another composition. The frantic desperation of life reached that enlightened Divine Wind of a kamikaze pilot finding sublime tranquility and calm in the nadir of battle knowing that all was ultimately lost, no matter however high his personal cost. This particular symphony I suspect is played in a remote Siberian gulag on voices of dissent as a wicked act of solace of cultural compassion for those hungry, bruised and beaten in modern medieval circumstances. The imposing point is that only a Russian could compose a piece that tragic, that singularly bleak to overcome cracked dry-wood defenses of the soul with a symphonic flaming barrage of barren grief and squeeze salty tears to your eyes that after everything that should have gone right in principle, went sideways, fell so terribly wrong in reality. The bouncing pleasure yacht of living with vibrant sunsets and rolling waves morphing into a rudderless flotsam orange raft with your white knuckles baring testimony of clinging to a styrofoam lifesaver hoping to see a seagull of passing hope. It is the disconnect between “should have been” and “really was” is the gripping throttle that firmly fuels the pangs of manifest internal torment. This is a somber piece that should be banned in San Francisco during the summer months with Mark Twain's cold and fog. Smoke does get in your eyes. Music, in its varied genres and moods, does play with an impact on our passing lives.



Jeanne Moreau and Miles Davis

1959

Miles on top of his game with “Kind of Blue”

I am advocating unequivocally that a monument to Miles Davis in Scotland be set standing. Britain has been long keen on erecting monuments to mere martial mortals and merchants including slavers. Liverpool has the Beatles; Scotland now needs Miles. This idea should not be up for tawdry bar debate when it is so apparent to all that this penetrating jazz artist is justly so deserving. Miles is proof of the power of recordings that can reach into future generations. I

heard a few years ago that Nina Simone's works gained some notoriety with younger women who had no connection to the Civil Rights Movement of the '60s. It will be centuries from now and people will be listening to the introspective and cool jazz of Miles. Milestones. Miles Ahead. I grew up as with my father putting on the LP of Kind of Blue in the sixties and countless other men, especially Black, did too. Kind of Blue from 1959 is, I believe, still the most sold jazz recording of all time. It basically defined a generation and it still resonates. Something about Miles' style was he was so smooth and yet so cutting — no —piercing into your interior; the space you reserved for you he soon found out and was sitting there in your chair asking for a drink. Mingus sometimes by force and moaning thick home stew servings really tried, Coltrane pressed and hit hard, but it was Miles sitting in your worn spattered chair waiting for you to come home and pour; just Miles waiting with the bottle in hand welcoming you back to your humble sanctuary.

Sure, Miles is forever adored worldwide. I am certain in Tokyo there are those that listen to him religiously just as in New York, Paris or Sao Paulo. Why Miles deserves to be revered and not forgotten in Scotland is for quite a simple, pardon, *neat* cogent reason: more single malt and blended Scotch whisky has been opened and poured when Miles is played above all other spirits. Think of all the Johnnie Walker Red & Black cracked open with the first bars of Kind of Blue. This album will continue to play until humanity collapses. What is Chivas Regal or Laphroaig without "Blue and Green" or "So What"? If one thinks of all the people in the all the years for more than half a century that heard Miles' horn and immediately ordered a drink or reached for a bottle themselves — nothing else — but Scotch whisky worldwide, it would comfortably bob a modern Panamax containership like a cork in a bay. Scotland's whisky exports over the years has been more than well-floated by the horn of Miles Davis. Miles' cool ice melts well with Scotch whisky best. Give Miles his due for all he has done for Dewar's White Label. Pass the Macallan please for Miles and give him the respect where he done the most for its distilling industry, tourism and economy: Scotland.

Don Elam

November 01, 2022