

Beijing Music Interviews

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Interview with Member of FM3:

(John Fenn has audio tape of this interview)

Interview is in English; Interviewee is clearly well educated. His apartment is full of books on philosophy, art, music, etc. Also stacks of CDs.

Also there from U.S. ChinaVine Team: Doug Blandy, John Fenn, Myra Tam, Jess Yates.

He says there is no difference between tradition and improvisation. It is all the same thing. It is traditional because it is been in the school system or becomes educational. At one time it was improvisational.

Buddha Machines are meant to help people sleep. So often people fight the desire to sleep when they are in a concert, so he thinks he should work on making music to allow them to sleep. He says most people are wound up. He wants to work on the opposite need—to mellow people out.

He says that contemporary music in China should be self-taught; because Chinese people follow Westerners.

Second Hand Rose Band.

Interview is lead by John Fenn in Chinese; Myra Tam translates.

The lead singer does the interview between songs by the band minus one member who is playing something else this afternoon. We meet in a room in a huge apartment garage. We squeeze in the room with the band. It's a very exciting time for us. They play songs and in between we talk. We are all drawn to one of the guitar players. We take lots of pictures of him.

Their name, Second Hand, is so that they are not seen as second hand, as music that is derivative. The name Rose is used because it is beautiful.

The lead singer sometimes dresses as a woman in order to point out the break down of gender boundaries. He wants to break down all kinds of boundaries: good/bad; male/female, etc. He can work in this border space. This is where the breakthroughs come. Some say they don't like it.

He uses both folk and traditional instruments as well as contemporary ones. His style is conversational. It comes from his hometown. It is a way of singing that they do there.

Some critics say that the band is something special. It was more conservative ten years ago.

It's not just about the look, he tells us, it is about the content of the music.

We are told that influences include: James Brown, Jesus Lizard and a Taiwanese singer no one of us knows (also some group that sounded like the Crimates—others seemed to know who that was—not me.)

They say SHR has influence the rock market in China.

Their goal is to learn more about more different kinds of music. They want artistic achievement. To be more recognized.

They say that Rock and Roll in China is more underground. It is not well respected by the general population.

They write about simple things in life. It could be a love story, famous people, etc.

We talk about Brokeback Mountain, the movement. They say they want acceptance of that (gay/homosexual lifestyles).

They see themselves as a group that experiments. They are a group of people trying to do music.

Lead singer Zen Band

(John Fenn has an audio tape of conversation. John lead the discussion but questions came from everyone.)

Interview takes place in a park. He brought his wife with him.

He went to the Central Academy of Fine Art. It is very competitive. Only 12-16 people were in his class. 1 in 7,000 applicants get in the school. The government pays for most everything.

Then he lived in NYC. He went there to think about who h was and he finds out, "I'm Chinese." So, he figures, he should do something with the Chinese. He came back to China in 2007

He draws inspiration from the Peking opera. He likes the style, the clothes. He likes traditional music and art. He uses traditional music—the melody with his singing and the base.

He uses Zen philosophy. The rhythm—everyone will recognize that he wants to use Chinese philosophy as an American style.

Zen means shit—but it is not dirty or clean. It's the same thing.

He can put pop music and jazz music together.

Painting influences him. He has visual pictures of sounds as he composes.

Many bands copy what is popular and what is in style. They don't talk Chinese. He thinks this is wrong, but maybe this is part of the process. But it isn't good for the Chinese.

He wants to express Chinese culture. He needs to find some ways to do R & R music this way.

He started by copying too. Metallica. He had long hair, wore tight jeans, but her doesn't have a tattoo. Instead, he has a bracelet. He would swing his hair around.

Right now many rock bands are using Chinese culture. Many sing in the traditional way.

Mom bought a guitar for me when I was 12 (he says). He learned to play by himself and by watching videos. The Door, the Beatles, Dire Straits. Foreign students had the videos.

He makes zines. It was new in 2008. He just started doing this work.

He has a great interest in the Cultural Revolution. There is too much change in China since the CR. Young people use the CR to make money.

He was born in 1976. China started to change in 1980.