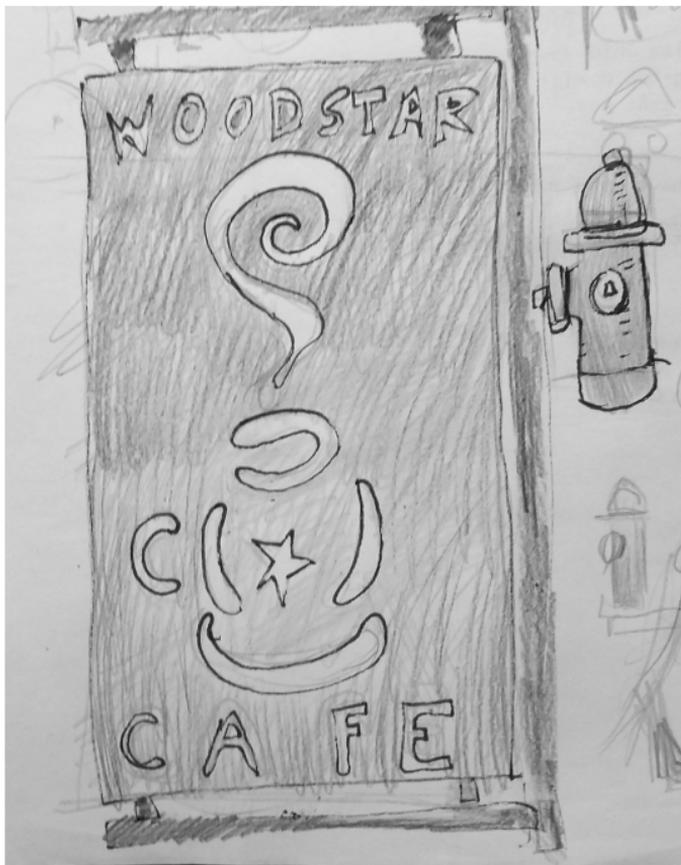


Birds of Mars Digest

Number Seventeen

November—December 2022



Drawings [256—265]
Video Show [#16-17]

Introduction

November—December 2022 was a time of beginnings for me. I didn't create a lot of new artworks, but I did spend a lot of time working on making art. In particular I was working on creating artworks of the Woodstar Cafe. I began by making studies and thinking of ways to make new art. I made a lot of paintings and kept reworking them. Slowly they would look better.

I made some sketches at the Woodstar as well, and then I made a lot of prototype paintings. Eventually I decided to focus on the 11x14" size paintings. I didn't complete any new paintings over these two months, so there is no "Noho Pop" section in this issue of the digest.

I have had a few art shows at the Woodstar over the years, the first being in 2011. That show was of large prints selected from a series of multi-media paintings of scenes of Northampton that I had made in 1997. Many of those prints are in the office of the Northampton Survival Center. I feel a close affinity to their organization, which provides food for people in need.

Chris Gentes
Northampton, Massachusetts

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Drawings [256—265]

By the time November arrived I had decided to focus on just making art of the Woodstar Cafe. I also realized that it would make sense to have a separate file for music related drawings. So I decided that for 2023 I would have just that—a separate folder for music, and these drawings would be art related.

November 2022

256 Study: Woodstar 1

257 Study: Woodstar 2

258 Study: Woodstar 3

259 Study: Woodstar 4

260 Study: Woodstar 5

261 Study: Woodstar 6

262 Study: Woodstar 7

263 Study: Woodstar 8

364 Study: Woodstar 9

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265 Study: Woodstar 10

Birds of Mars Video Show

Birds of Mars Video Show #16

Live at Iconica Social Club

MPEG-4, 960x540

40 minutes 25 seconds

This is a recording from October 8, 2022.

Sir Cecil, drums

Michael Suter, bass

Tommy Twilite, vocals

Chris Gentes, sax

Birds of Mars Video Show #17

“Song Seeds”

MPEG-4, 960x540

41 minutes 38 seconds

When I get an idea for a song I'll record the changes (and maybe some lyrics) so I won't forget them, thinking that at least I'll have something to “work with later.” I usually end up with half a dozen or so songs in each audio file. And of course, I usually never end up working on them later. Then I'll forget about the songs and the file. I've got hundreds of songs like this in dozens of random files. This collection of “Song Seeds” is one of those files that I found & listened to the other day. I decided to put them in this video show (#17) to keep for posterity, because I kind of like them. Maybe one day I'll round up a group of musicians and make a good recording of them, but for now, they're what they are, song seeds. They show some of my processes for writing songs, which may be of interest to someone. All the art is made with one of those ai art generator things that I have fun using.

00:00 “April Snow”

This song is about me remembering that feeling I had when I was a teenager sitting on the back porch of my parent's house by myself at

night drinking a beer. I recorded this in April 2022. It isn't really a demo because the lyrics aren't complete. I was just making them up as I went, and with each verse I got a better idea of what they should be. I was just singing what seemed to fit. "April Snow" seemed to fit, and then I started thinking that 'April Snow' meant nuclear bomb fallout, because I think there was one of those nuclear bomb scares at the time. "Sitting on the back porch drinking a beer, I don't care. All my friends are living in fear, but I don't care. Where do the robins go in the April snow? It's all a show, it's all a show."

07:15 "Floppy Hat"

I was messing around with the changes to "Don't Think Twice" by Dylan where they go from a major to a seventh (a sound I love), and I kind of evolved them, and came up with a nice progression. Just needed some lyrics. As I sat there playing, I happened to look out the window and saw a woman walking by and she had a floppy hat and an orange dog. I made up a story about her. I changed it to cat so it rhymed with hat. Then I got nostalgic and wistful and kept going. Maybe one day I'll finish the lyrics and make a better recording. For now it remains a seed. Lyrics need more work. Maybe one day. Here's the gist of it...

"She had a floppy hat and an orange cat. She dreamed of living by the sea. She liked to walk. And she liked to talk. Sooner or later she'd be talking to me. She liked to smile, it lingered a while. When she danced, she was dancing with me. It's been much too long since I sang this song, so sing it one more time with me. There's no glory, in a beat up old story. Walk with me, by the sea. An old hippy bus and memories of us, drinking whiskey by the fire. Remember when we rode that highway to the very end? Stood by the ocean and watched the sun disappear. That's how the story ends. Pick me up and put me down again. There ain't nothing I'd rather be than me. I guess I'm the only one I can believe. Up on the hill behind the church they got apple trees, for morels we'll search, so meet me on the hilltop where we used to play."

14:25 "At The Chestnut"

Sometimes I'll be playing randomly for hours and I'll suddenly hit upon something that sounds really good. It jolts me, and I'll think that I

better record it before it's lost. This little riff was one of those. I think it might actually be one of Herbie Hancock's songs. If it is, it isn't intentionally plagiarized. I should probably double check that. Anyways, I like to play this one at the Wild Chestnut Cafe where I've been playing piano on Saturdays for almost a year now.

17:00 "Been A Long Time"

I don't remember anything about writing, singing or recording this one. It was on the garageband file in the middle of the other ones. It needs more lyrics, but it shows one process of how I write a song. By the end of it the lyrics are better formulated, as is the feel of it. I think this would be a good song for Norah Jones. But then again, I think all my songs would be good for Norah Jones to sing. Her voice is the most beautiful. There's a lot of space in-between the lyrics where a sax would sound nice. I think she was eating a slice of pizza once at Sam's when I was playing piano there before an open mic back in 2017 or 2018. I played something that was kind of funny and she smiled and laughed a little bit. I played it cool. Kid Rock used to hang out there once in a while too. He said he wasn't Kid Rock, but we all knew otherwise and let him and his wife be anonymous.

"Been a long time since I seen you coming around. Long, long, long, long time since you've been coming around. I don't care much about the city life, I like the simple kind of life. Been a long time since I saw you smile. Long, long, long, long, long time. Don't care much about the city folk, they'll leave you in the gutter to die. Been a long time since I put my blues away. The back yard needs some weeding, the crows are here to stay. Don't care much about the city anyway."

24:50 "Leavin' in the Mornin'"

This is a song about being in a band and going on tour, like Ziggy Stardust. I'm fairly sure that I originally wrote this one in the fall of 2019. I have a spiral notebook with a bunch of songs from back then. So many songs I've written. It's like baking cakes for me.

"It's been much too long since I put my blue jeans on. I've got one more night, to get this song just right. We're leaving in the morning, and

won't be back for many a day. I've got one more chance to make it go my way."

27:40 "Diamonds and Rubies"

This one needs lyrics no doubt about that. The whole melody is there though. I envision it as a song in a Broadway musical, the end of the first act. Sung by the main character about his love interest. All his plans are constantly foiled. "I give her diamonds, she only wants rubies." Something along those lines. I like the feel of it and that's why I recorded it. But to write lyrics for it would be a lot of work. And even if so, then what? Almost everybody I know is a musician too, and a songwriter, and has dozens of tunes just like me. A lot of them already have CDs and some have vinyl. It'd be so nice to have a band with a lot of instruments and to orchestrate out some nice arrangements to this song. This song would be so nice with instrumental parts. The solo part (29:15 through 29:45) would be all orchestrated out. I can imagine how it would sound. The AI did a good job with this artwork. I kept telling it "piano, diamonds and rubies", and after ten or twenty attempts it finally dropped this image on me. Actually, it looks like it could be the set for a musical. This song was inspired by a song my friend Kaylita wrote. She sang it once at an open mic. Her song goes something like, "Want Prada, want Gucci."

32:25 "Kind and Beautiful"

This is a song I wrote way back when, sometime in 2017 maybe. There are lyrics too, but I didn't sing them here. When I first started playing piano at open mics I would get so nervous all the time, but I wanted to play. And I wanted to sing too, so I did, and it was usually a horror show train wreck. But I kept doing it because it was so much fun. This was one of the songs I would sing a lot. Eventually one of my friends who used to go to Sam's would sing it, and I would accompany her on piano. So I would be in heaven playing it with her singing, because she had such a nice voice. She had the lyrics saved in her phone. Those really were the good old days. 2017-2019. And why did the AI 'sign' this art up in the upper right? The AI makes me laugh sometimes.

38:50 “Barely Dreaming”

This one needs work, lyrics are needed. But the music I like. It's a nice seed. It is a kind of haunting melody and I like the changes. Maybe something like this “I am scheming, barely dreaming, it's a feeling, I am nearing. Barely dreaming, it is seeming. Am I dreaming, really dreaming?” Lol, I'm working on this song even now typing these comments. It never ends. If I ever do anything more with this one I think I'll change the title to “Really Dreaming.” And this one would have a very long sax solo in performance. It be fun to solo over these changes. Maybe it would be an instrumental and the lyrics would be sung by a choir at different times during the solo to really push it along and top it off, and then look out, the full band would come in...