

International Digital Electronic Accordion Society concert (Nov. 9)

by Robert Rollin



This past week, metropolitan Warren, Ohio played host to the International Digital Electronic Accordion Society. The terrific Friday night concert on November 9 at the Avalon Inn & Resort, part of a symposium, drew world-class professionals from New Zealand, Australia, Italy, Canada, and the United States.

The evening opened with an accordion ensemble playing a lively musical *mélange*. The

highlight was composer/accordionist Joseph Natoli's *Smooth*. After a slow introduction enlivened by drummer Don Yallech's cymbal rolls, a fast tango prevailed. An engaging solo featuring Natoli himself (*pictured above*) raced by. Individual players joined him in parallel thirds, and the result was enthralling.

Natoli demonstrated fine dynamic variety in his gentler *Tango d'Amor*, and the ensemble deftly accompanied his delicate pianissimos. His arrangement of David Foster's and Carol Bayer Sager's *Prayer* featured a heartfelt solo by soprano Paula Pellafone.

After California accordionist Richard Noel performed exciting improvisations on *In the Mood* and offered up a *Fiddler on the Roof* medley, Natoli returned for a solo set. His rendition of Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* displayed the free bass digital accordion's remarkable orchestral timbres.

Michael Soloway joined Natoli for gentle counterpoint in his short, unpretentious *Friendship*. (He and Soloway planned and organized the symposium.) *The One*, a warm

tribute in memory of his teacher, Mickey Basilia, had charm and grace, particularly in its use of sequential harmonic progressions.

Natoli adroitly approximated a skillful lead guitar in his arrangement of Mark Slaughter's *Flight of the Angels*. Natoli's *Epic Cinematic Soundtrack* was an imaginary film score in search of a movie, using sprightly cross rhythms and a surprising array of orchestral effects with percussion.



The final set featured Michael Bridge and Cory Pesaturo, two young digital accordionists who are also top recitalists. Bridge contrasted a rollicking performance of the rock tune *Tequila* accompanied by Yallech's drum set, with a soulful performance of Luis Enríque Bacalov's theme from the Italian film *Il Postino*.



Bridge closed with Tchaikovsky's massive *1812 Overture*, using all the digital tools available on his new Bugari Evo accordion to approximate solo oboe and string bass, as well as full brass-driven orchestral tutti with obligatory cannon shots.

Pesaturo began with an amazing du-wop vocal patch that raced by at a speed worthy of the Swingle Singers. *Three Italian Tarantellas* followed with similar breakneck virtuosity. He finished with an outstanding, jazzy performance of Bronislaw Kaper's ever-popular *Green Dolphin Street*, accompanied skillfully by Yallech.

Bridge and Pesaturo joined forces in improvisatory Hungarian pieces, including Monti's *Czardas* and Brahms' *Hungarian Dance No. 5*. Yallech's sensitive drumming kept pace, and the enthusiastic audience gave the three a standing ovation.

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