

Ancient Future: Interpreting the World's Music

SIERRA CITY, CA. The cedar and pine forest canopy above Sierra City's Kentucky Mine resonated with sound on July 23. The occasion? A concert by Ancient Future, a musical group noted for its unique interpretations of the world's ancient musical traditions.

The Kentucky Mine Amphitheatre, fresh-washed by an afternoon rain shower and overshadowed by the craggy Sierra Buttes and a star-filled sky, was a perfect setting for the performance, one of a summer series that takes place each Friday through September. Proceeds benefit the Kentucky Mine.

Ancient Future, playing what has been called "world fusion music," transcends easy labels. Band leader Matthew Montfort, a virtuoso guitarist who founded Ancient Future in 1978, is philosophical. "We've been called a New Age group. Currently we fit into the growing genre known as world music."

Here, in this high-Sierra summer setting close by an old gold mining town, Ancient Future's range entranced listeners. The Kentucky Mine concert featured numbers that blended rock and roll with Balinese rhythms, blues with an Oriental twist, and jazz influenced by music from northern India. There was South American music with a California patina, and uniquely-interpreted African music.

Although the recording industry prefers musical groups that fit into pre-defined categories, says Montfort, the group has succeeded anyway. Ancient Future has made six popularly-received recordings. The band's most recent release, *Asian Fusion*, was produced in late 1992 by Narada, and features guest artists from China and Vietnam.

Each of the five musicians present at Kentucky Mine pushed the boundaries of conventional music, demonstrating lifelong passions for synthesizing the music of many cultures with that found in the United States.

Percussionist Ian Dogole, for example, brought humor, surprise and passion to his task, literally dashing between better-known North American percussion instruments and

chimes, rattles and other seldom-seen rhythmic tools. He performed a memorable solo on the African talking drum, which he squeezed and stroked like a live thing.

Between numbers the musicians talked lovingly of their travels and inspirations. Guest artist Bill Douglass, nimble-fingered for most of the evening on the acoustic bass, also demonstrated his command of the Chinese flute. A student of Chinese music for more than two decades, he eased into his solos, tentatively at first, finally playing with soulful simplicity.

Violinist Jim Hurley practically caught the trees — and the audience — on fire with his fiery composition, "Lakshmi Rocks Me." At one with his instrument, Hurley was a true professional, his practiced fingerings soaring effortlessly above accompaniment by the rest of the group.

Keyboardist Doug McKeehan also made the complex musical blendings appear easy. Working two keyboards at once, he added improvised jazz flourishes as well as performing his own accomplished solos.

Matthew Montfort, leader and anchor of the Marin County-based group through its personnel changes and guest artists over the years, demonstrated astounding virtuosity. With fingers flying and sliding over his amplified acoustic Gibson guitar, the award-winning guitarist played with authority and sensitivity. Notable was his piece honoring the Silk Road, "The Trader." Both mesmerizing and dramatic, the composition honored the many cultures to be found on this historic trade route.

Ancient Future ended the evening to enthusiastic encores. For one magical evening, the Kentucky Mine became the center of the planet.

— *Betty Sederquist*

Betty Sederquist

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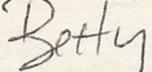
Dear Mr. Montfort:

Thank you for sending the brochures and other promotional materials. They were most helpful, though some did duplicate what Karen Donaldson gave me.

Enclosed is a copy of the review I wrote for Karen. If you can use any of these phrasings anywhere, be my guest.

Thanks again for the CD.

Sincerely,



Betty Sederquist