



STEVE KINDLER - *Across A Rainbow Sea*
BAREFOOT - *Barefoot*
By Ralph Burnett

Following Steve Kindler's career is like trying to tail a Ferrari through the Autobahn on a moped! And so it is only appropriate that Steve should have a band project out in addition to his first solo project, both on Global Pacific. All I can say is: hang on--you're going for a ride...Barefoot...Across A Rainbow Sea.

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Even though his parents lived in Alaska, Steve was born in Oregon where the available medical attention was presumed better. Steve is the youngest of five musical siblings. "One of my earliest memories, as a two and a-half or three year-old," says Steve, "was looking way up at my brother and sister, (who were monstrously tall at that time), listening to them and watching them play the Bach Concerto for two violins. Until this day I have a great fondness for that [piece of music]." Steve's mother and father were also musicians but, as Steve puts it, "when they got married they started raising kids instead of making music and just made sure that we were all playing."

When he was three-years old, Steve's family moved to Oregon permanently where there was a good youth symphony in Portland as well as a "magnificently wonderful" violin teacher named Raphael Spiro, who Steve acclaims to be "one of the great players of this century." Says Steve, "he was able to impart kind of a style of romantic violin playing to his students that you don't find amongst too many teachers in this day and age. There's the modern Israeli school of violin playing which is stable and strong but not really romantic and beautiful like the violin playing of Chrysler or Heifetz. Violin playing has almost become period in a way...there are very few players these days that play it with the same panache that players back fifty or seventy-five years ago did."

Steve explains that his family was not exempt from the competitive spirit that is engendered in a family of classical musicians. "Competitiveness in conservatory playing is one of the pitfalls, and I think ultimately the downfalls, of classical, dogmatic approaches to music. With the violin

especially, there's so many people out there who are looking for those few positions in the orchestras. You always have this host of players all around you who are hyper-critical of you and are competitive to the point of being sick about it. You know, pity the poor sap who gets up in front of an audience and tries to play that well-worn old concerto for the hundred-and-sixty-zillionth time and God forbid makes a wrong note--there is a lot of real sickness about it because it's based on fear and envy and that's not the reason why I play music."

"The reason that I'm a composer," continues Steve, "and thank heaven that I can compose, is that it gives me ability to express myself. Now I'll go into a set of music of my own compositions and in the midst of it I'll play one of the Four Seasons or a Bach concerto or some piece of music that I've made a minus-one part--playing along with synthesizers and sequences-- and I get tremendously enthusiastic responses.... That's how [Classical music] can be used and there's no block there--there's no dogma."

After only a year of lessons, when he was ten, Steve was playing in symphony orchestras; and at age twelve, was touring Europe with one. Says Steve, "there was lots of incentive to work very hard, I had great teacher."

Like the other teens growing up, Steve was very much into Led Zeppelin, Jethro Tull and The Beatles which became the framework of his eclectic approach to the violin. "When I was sixteen I began playing the violin through microphones and amplifiers and whatever else I could get my hands on to play through," says Steve, "which, of course, sounded abysmal but at least got me up there in the same volume so that I could sit in with some of the garage rock bands."

When Steve was eighteen and a junior in high school, he got the call. "It was really ironic and wonderful and very magical almost when it happened," says Steve. "The day before I was to finish playing my last year as concertmaster of the orchestra that I was with, I was rehearsing the solo which constituted the big final hurrah for me, when I got a call from John McLaughlin who invited me to come to New York because he needed another violinist for his Mahavishna Orchestra. He had heard of me through a friend of my brothers and said that there would be a ticket for me and that I would be paid salary and that we were preparing for U.S. and European and world tour. Of course, my jaw hit the ground and I ran around in circles for weeks."

"I was very inspired by John McLaughlin and his ability to

marry classical technique and the classical approach with jazz and other forms," says Steve. "He was also a very barrierless musician who at that time was exhibiting great openness and freedom in the kind of music that he created."

"And talk about simultaneous amazing occurrences," continues Steve, "I was sitting at my older sister Barbs house and we were playing bluegrass late one night, (which was always our music of choice when we got together), and I got this call out of the blue from Jan Hammer saying that Jerry Goodman and he split up and he was looking for another violin player and he wanted me to come to his place in up-state New York and play with his band. I told him that I thought it would be great and went back to playing bluegrass. Not two hours later, John called up and said that Jean Luc had left the band and that he would feel deeply disappointed and let down if I didn't help him out on his upcoming tour which was co-billed with Jeff Beck. So there I was stuck in the middle of two monsters--two of the people I was most influenced by. I managed to walk the tight rope between the two; when Mahavishna Orchestra was on break from the tour, I went back and recorded on Jan's album First Seven Days."

Eventually, Steve quit the Mahavishna Orchestra to devote more time to Jan's Band. "[Mahavishna Orchestra] was such a big band and there wasn't that much opportunity for soloing and Jan's band was just four members. Jan was a real genius--an amazing player and technician and one of the first synthesizer players to really open up new avenues of expression."

Steve also accepted an offer to do some gigs with guitar great, Jeff Beck. "Jeff was another real master class for me in how to play the guitar," says Steve, "he was not a technician by any means but he can create such an incredible sound with his instrument."

After a couple of years touring with Jan and Jeff, in 1978, Steve's brother convinced him he should take a break and move to Hawaii. There he played with the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra, met the woman he was to marry, had a child and tried to assimilate what he learned through osmosis with Mahavishna Orchestra and all the other fine players and tried to make it a part of his technique and musical vocabulary. But, as Steve explains, "one thing about tropical climates is that things rust very easily; and careers and people not withstanding."

So in 1983, Steve moved back to the mainland. "Global

Pacific was interested in having me come back to do some recording for them," says Steve, "and from '83 I've been recording with them and it's been good because they've given me lots of artistic license and liberty to do lots of different kinds of projects." Steve did a project with guitarist Teja Bell called Dolphin Smiles; Global Village is an album Steve did with percussionist Tor Dietrichson; and Fresh Impressions is a duet project that Steve did with harpist Georgia Kelly. "It's given me a real window of opportunity to stay on top of the technology, so much of which is making the music these days."

Most recently Steve has worked with Shadowfax and performed with Kitaro and recorded on his highly acclaimed project Kojiki. "The day of the [San Francisco] earthquake, as a matter a fact, was the last session," recounts Steve. "[Kitaro] is such an interesting and unusual person and concept artist. He has a tremendous amount of money behind him and has done very well on album sales so he can afford the consummate staging and lighting for his shows and he does a great deal with minimal music."

"I did these last two albums (Across A Rainbow Sea and Barefoot) after coming back off the road with Kitaro," continues Steve. "Across The Rainbow Sea is a concept album which was very much a studio creation. Barefoot, is a band that revolves around dance and dancers and I'd like to think that it brings the dance back into jazz, from which it has been conspicuously absent for thirty or forty years. It was a matter of having in lots of good Bay Area percussionists, turning on mics and rolling tape and letting the music organically compose itself."

Beyond just creating great music, Steve has a much broader goal which involves changing the modern perceptions of the violin as an instrument: "I think the violin has been wrongfully stereotyped as an instrument that is limited in it's scope and I see it as being a very expansive instrument," says Steve. "It has tremendous potential for emotional expression: you can be very lyrical and beautiful and sweet and sensitive on it and you can also be very passionate and fiery. And it's crossed very panned cultural: it has tremendous use in both American and European folk music, you find the instrument in traditional Cuban music, you find it in music of South America, you find it even in Indian music and Oriental music." Steve would especially like to see the violin become a more prominent instrument in the Progressive Adult Contemporary idiom which is his current outlet.

"I also feel that I have a responsibility as an artist--to be given the gift of music is something that shouldn't be taken lightly. I'd love to be able to reach the people that I could maybe uplift...or make their life a little easier. I feel somehow that the sound of the violin is the sound of the heart--very emotional and beautiful." And Steve smilingly adds, "I would just like to be able to continue to do what I'm doing now and not worry about being put in an old-folks home."