

# Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica

## Biography (2/2010)

Venture out beyond the moon with **Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica!** Led by Boston percussionist Mr. Ho (Brian O'Neill), the Orchestrotica is the only 21-piece big band in the world that presents the supersonic "space-age bachelor pad" sounds of Juan Garcia Esquivel in a live setting. Esquivel was often referred to as Mexico's equivalent of Duke Ellington. He was an amazing arranger who created an intellectual pop sound crossing big band jazz, mambo, and space-age sounds—all beamed into the stereo hi-fi in your living room.

Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica got its start as a side project of Boston-based band, WAITIKI (of whom Mr. Ho was an original member). Mr. Ho took an interest in Esquivel's big band music in November of 2004, after he discovered the *More of Other Worlds, Other Sounds* CD at a small record store in Keane, NH. Mr. Ho had the idea that a "WAITIKI Orchestrotica" could perform this music live, and that the band should try to prepare a set of Esquivel to be added to an upcoming performance. After researching the music and looking for sheet music to rent, he was led to musician, Esquivel friend, and cocktail consultant Brother Cleve who informed him of a disappointing back story: the original manuscripts for Esquivel's arrangements had been lost decades earlier!

Having always had a strong ear for transcription and the gift of perfect pitch, Mr. Ho decided to pursue the Esquivel project anyways. He led an effort within his former group to transcribe some of Esquivel's arrangements by ear off of the original recordings. This led to a 2005 debut concert in Boston where nine arrangements were performed with a band of 17 musicians. By 2008, Mr. Ho had parted ways with WAITIKI and reformed the group as a separate project called Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica, culminating in a collection of big band transcriptions for 21 musicians spanning Esquivel's zaniest works from CDs like *Infinity in Sound*, *Esquivel 1968!*, and *Other Worlds, Other Sounds*. Mr. Ho continues to edit these transcriptions in an attempt to improve on their quality and accuracy. Much of the repertoire consists of studio arrangements that Esquivel never performed live.

After a few local shows in Boston's Milky Way Lounge, Lizard Lounge, and Jorge Hernandez Cultural Center, international interest grew. On April 1, 2006, the group performed for its largest crowd to date in Mexico City as participants in the Festival de México's Homenaje Nacional á Juan García Esquivel. In October 2008, they returned to Mexico for another performance at the Festival Internacional de los Nuevos Vientos Ecatepec. In 2010, Mr. Ho's **Orchestrotica** may appear at the Toronto Jazz Festival and Montreal Jazz Festival, and **Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica Mini** (a quartet-sized exotica/tiki/jazz group led by Mr. Ho on vibraphone and percussion) will appear in NYC and Boston performing works by Martin Denny, Milt Raskin, Arthur Lyman, Les Baxter, and Mr. Ho himself.



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