

# Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica

## Biography for the Esquivel big band project

Venture out beyond the moon with **Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica**! Led by percussionist, vibraphonist, and composer Mr. Ho (Brian O'Neill), Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica is the only 22-piece big band in the world that presents the supersonic space-age bachelor-pad sounds of Juan Garcia Esquivel live in concert. Esquivel was a studio orchestra arranger in the 1950s and 1960s who was known for his use of blistering brass, boisterous latin percussion, wordless vocals, and mid-century Hollywood sound. Best known as one of the original exploiters of the stereo (two-channel) sound format, Esquivel released many albums intended only for hi-fi listening at home that were never performed live...until now.

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 an 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 mixologist Brother Cleve (Combustible Edison) who informed him that 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 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 left WAITIKI and reformed the group as a separate project called Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica, which would be comprised of the Esquivel big band, and a third-stream exotica quartet. Today, their library of transcriptions now contain Esquivel's zaniest works from albums such as *Infinity in Sound*, *Esquivel 1968!*, and *Other Worlds, Other Sounds*. When performing the Esquivel repertoire, the group swells to 22 musicians, roughly combining standard big-band instrumentation with four singers, steel guitar, extensive mallet and hand percussion, accordion, Hammond B-3 organ, and bass flute.

After several shows in Boston, international interest grew. On April 1, 2006, the group performed for over 1000 listeners 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 and two years later, they released their acclaimed debut album, *The Unforgettable Sounds of Esquivel*, which *Downbeat* described as having "incredible arrangements, musicianship and artistic direction." The album also received four stars from the *Sunday Times London* ("...exquisite attention to details..."), and became a Top CD for 2010 by *AllAboutJazz*. The album is currently playing in 10,000 Starbucks stores nation-wide and will be followed up in May 2011 with the group's first quartet album, *Third River Rangoon*. Referencing the exotica of Martin Denny, Milt Raskin, Tchaikovsky, and Shostakovich among others, the Orchestrotica's normal formation as a vibraphone quartet presents an original third-stream collection of updated jazz, chamber, and world music reaching towards the South Pacific via Asia, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Latin America. The *Boston Globe* perhaps describes the band best: "...a marvelously flexible unit that can morph from a small combo to a full-blown 23-piece orchestra..."

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