



Theatre X was the scene for one of Milwaukee's more memorable music events this past Friday evening. At 8:00 pm the building became a temporary lodging place for Sigmund Snopek III, several local musicians and about 45 fortunate guests, all there to assist in performing Snopek's "Ascension of the Sun."

The audience had been asked to bring certain items for the half-day extravaganza: blankets, pillows, a bag lunch, and a household appliance that made interesting sounds. Thus prepared, they sat on mattresses and cushions provided by Theatre X and

somniac's Command". Truly an Integrated program of mixed media at its best.

But hats must be doffed for the folks in the audience. Phrases like "good vibes", "mellow feelings" and "brother-and-sister atmosphere" have been all but beaten to death in the press, yet they all fit last Friday's event like a glove. Strangers made friends, smiles were contagious, couples got closer, hostilities were left outside the door. That darkened room at 1247 N. Water St. held more constructive electricity than a power com-



Photo by Cathy Gubin

Snopek:

'ASCENSION OF THE SUN'

let Siggie work his magic.

For the next 8 hours everyone became part of an intricate musical tapestry woven by Snopek and his comrades. Aiding him were trusty Byron Weiman on acoustic and electric guitars and dapper David Phillips on electric bass. Manning the two banks of synthesizers, sequencers and ARPs flanking the audience were Paul Solberg, Chris Wartchow and Greg Fish. Fish arrived after midnight, having driven here from a gig in Chicago.

The activities were mapped out in advance by Snopek but flexibility ruled the roost. So when "Performance Of New Songs" segment lasted longer than expected, all was well. And when, early in the morning hours during "Audience Sleeping Time", the band broke into an impromptu boogie number, everyone woke up with smiles on their faces.

Snopek showcased several brand new tunes penned especially for the event. Included were "Absolutely Nothing", during which the people chanted the song's hard-to-remember two words for a gleeful 20 minutes. Then there was the immortal "Armpit Shuffle", "21 Fingers", "Mad Maiden Love Song" and "Winter's Edge". Snopek indicated that the songs would be included on an album, probably to be released next year.

Several electronic pieces were presented, among them Greg Fish's "Pyramids" and "Cityscapes I" by Wartchow. Particularly memorable was the eerie "Lonely Hearts" by Peter Parkman, a tape collage of aberrations of the human heartbeat. And finally a tape of Siggie reading Angela Peckinpaugh's poem "In-

pany sub-station.

The English group Trapeze recorded a tune called "You Are The Music-We're Just The Band", a statement that Snopek swears by. His concerts can be demanding, in the sense that he asks so much from his audience, but his requests were eagerly granted last Friday-in spades. The air was filled with the sounds of chants, harmony, rotating egg beaters, rings on glass, tin pans being rattled and laughter. Happy participation was there in epidemic proportions.

Around 4:00 A.M. the people were awakened by a tape of Jim Gorton singing "Ascension Of The Sun", a mesmerizing piece which took me back to a Catholic seminary and Gregorian chants. All of us then got prepared for the last leg of the festivities—a caravan out to Mequon where the sunrise would be greeted with song along the beach of Lake Michigan.

Thick, soupy fog accompanied us on our journey north to the home of Pat Swenson, a gracious woman who had donated the use of her front yard and beach for the completion of "Ascension Of The Sun". But because of the dense murk and cliff erosion, our ceremony was performed on her spacious lawn.

Upon arrival we were treated to a sculpture by Elizabeth Boettcher, a UWM graduate now living in Chicago. Having survived problems caused by a fuse in an electric power supply, Boettcher's creation winked at us from its resting position in the grass.

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The fog refused to lift and the spooky sunrise was welcomed with silence and frisbees. About 20 people made the trip out to Mequon, bringing their vibes and togetherness with them. Among the guests were a couple whose marriage was to take place that afternoon-- they had decided that what better way to spend their wedding eve than with the good people and artistry of Sigmund Snopek.

Saturday, June 21, 1975, was not only the longest day of the year but also the Summer Solstice, a fact Siggie was completely unaware of when he first planned the date for "Ascension Of The Sun". Ironically, He and the good folks that helped him were responsible for a solar welcome which would have made the Glastonbury monks envious.

—Bill Bruckner