

DJ Gary's Beatnik Karaoke

Why I loved the Beatniks

I was never really comfortable being in the period of the “**Hippies**” which started in the middle 60’s (I think?). I grew up with the “**Beatniks**”. These were the rebels of the 50’s. This is jazz, this is be-bop, this is cool, this is wearing a black suit and a skinny tie but not being buttoned downed. The first time I heard Charlie Parker play the saxophone I nearly fainted; the same thing for Miles Davis with his “Kind of Blue” and “Porgy and Bess” (arranged by Gil Evans). I never understood how all my classmates could like Elvis Presley so much... Beatnik comes from “The Beat Generation”. They were considered by the straight world to be “deadbeats” or “good-for-nothings” but they were the only ones who saw white Anglo-Saxon protestant society for what it really was... this was the underground...

Why I love DJ music

Techno, House, Rap, Hip-Hop, is the music of today and before it was co-opted by the money. It was the underground, too. These days it can be **Dance, Trance, Ambient, Rave** but it’s the same as the Beatniks and their black suits: you use the material at hand to speak about what’s going on around you. Japanese technology, popular technology, available technology... My tailor is rich but my drums are Roland TR-808 beatbox... the love of electronic sound. I love it... Let’s use it...

What does Karaoke have to do with it?

Well, lets co-opt in the other direction as well... Andy Warhol co-opted Campbell soup cans and created Pop Art which was in turn co-opted by the money. I’m co-opting Karaoke so that I can’t get co-opted; Karaoke is so much fun for people at parties, but the reality is that it is like drinking Cheval Blanc-1983 mixed with diet Coca-Cola. Who wants to co-opt Karaoke? I do... because it’s about songs...

What is DJ Gary going to do?

He’s going to play songs and improvise on texts by Beatnik poets notably **Allen Ginsberg** and **Judith Malina**.

Ginsberg was not only a Beatnik but he metamorphosed into a Hippy and then became something else and then became something else again. He is one of the truly great American poets of the last 60 years. His poetry resounds with American-ness. It calls out to us and asks us to do better. It is unashamed in its straightforward honesty. It is humble but sure in its poetic perfection...

Judith is a great woman of American theater, having founded with Julian Beck, her husband and life long companion, "The Living Theater". She is still active (we saw her production of "The Brig" in Liège this last year) and still writes. Her poetry is filled with the passion of someone who cannot accept the status quo and expresses this in a way that only a woman can.

Why these two poets...? Because I had the privilege of playing with Ginsberg at several points in my life and I always felt very close to him as an artist... and Judith as well, I met her with "The Living..." during some rehearsals with the troupe. She gave me her collection of poems when she attended a concert that I played in Italy...

They are both poets of the left, which is where my heart is, as well.

So, DJ Gary's Beatnik Karaoke Is...?

Garrett List will play his songs and improvise on texts of Allen Ginsberg, Judith Malina and his own... He will use his portable computer to play his version of the electro music of today that will serve as his accompaniment. The texts may be projected or not according to the circumstances. All of the music will be by Garrett List. The texts though written, some of them, as long as 25-30 years ago, all make reference to the problems we face as intelligent, feeling beings today.

Is the end of the world near...?

What can we do...?

Stay tuned to find out...