

## ENOUGH ABOUT ME ALREADY: ROGER LIENKE BIOGRAPHY

I have been writing and singing my songs now for most of my life. Born in Galveston, TX and transplanted to Minnesota, I became a teenage refugee of the Minneapolis suburbs and brought my Yankee sensibilities to big, small-town, Oklahoma City in the mid 1960's. The northern edge of my voice was blended with the tone colors of Oklahoma earth and a vocal style found its home.

My early musical background was a mixed-bag. My mother was listening to opera. My sister was blending an interest in pre-Beatles top 40 radio with basic folk songs. My older brother was opening up to jazz and blues and my father taught me how to play the French horn. Meanwhile, I teamed up with my younger brother on an enthusiastic appreciation of Broadway theater and movie soundtracks and became a living room song and dance man.

Folk gave way to the Beatles and I drifted away from childhood piano lessons toward a deepening infatuation with the guitar. Sketches of show tunes and small piano pieces had already been composed. With the early guitar chords that I learned, my first pop songs took shape. Plunking them out on the acoustic guitar introduced me to the deeply mysterious experience of screaming appreciation from young females. With older brother Tupper and three other cronies I became a convicted member of my first rock and roll band. The Weavers became a fond memory, left to hold down the fort.

Mimicking the Beatles, Stones, Everly Brothers, Kinks, Hollies, and others of their ilk, took precedence over any original bent for a while but my own songs kept getting written on the side. *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* was on the record store shelves, "Get Off of My Cloud" was on the turntable, Paul Butterfield, Gerry Mulligan, Art Farmer, and big band music had some say. *Rubber Soul*. *Searchers #4*. Petula Clark's "Downtown".

Up further north, where some boyhood time got spent on an Ojibway Indian reservation, by the shore of Lake Superior, came my introduction to the sounds of Buck Owens, Roger Miller, an Ojibway brother local guitar duo, and country music. In 1966, Grand Portage, the reservation, became the launching pad for us three Lienke brothers to become the nucleus of a collaborative band involvement that, off and on, was to last the better part of sixteen years. Tupper's and my involvement in our inaugural band days (in Robbinsdale, MN), for a half year in our early teenhood, meant Tupper was now on electric keyboards and I had my first electric guitar. On the tail end of my eighth-grade school year, brother Tom was conscripted as bassist.

And then came the family move to Oklahoma City and school integration. Suddenly the world opened up to James Brown, Eddie Floyd, Sam and Dave, Wilson Pickett, The Kingsmen, Mitch Ryder, The Young Rascals, and the whole "Land of a Thousand Dances," joining forces with the British grit of the Yardbirds and the Animals, and the American folk rock of the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, and Simon and Garfunkel, in the repertoire of my musical influences. *Revolver*, *Fifth Dimension* (by the Byrds), "Strawberry Fields," "Penny Lane," and then the San Francisco sound took over. Lincoln Harvey Market was The Lienkes in our first incarnation as original artists, supported by the works of Country Joe and the Fish, The Grateful Dead, Frank Zappa,

Captain Beefheart, Jefferson Airplane, Soft Machine, Aaron Copland, Thelonious Monk, and other musical adventurers.

Gradually, after a few years of exploratory performance rock in which I focused on becoming a lead guitarist, I began making my way back to composing in the compact song format. A stint of concerts as Johnny Nash's rhythm guitarist and harmony singer, in the early '70s, introduced me to reggae music, which had a lingering impact on my writing.

Three singles were released by The Lienkes in 1974. In 1975 the theater music background in the family was given vent, by us brothers, in the scoring of a musical play (with book and direction by Mike Mullin) called *Love's Guts*. The Contemporary Arts Foundation of Oklahoma City published a book of my poetry in 1977 called *So Furry the Jungle*.

In 1979, *The Lienke Brothers City Band* album was recorded and released by No Sweat Records of Norman, OK and followed by a 45rpm single in 1980 on the same label. The Lienkes' second album, *Brothers by Choice*, was released out of Los Angeles in 1982 on the DIGI-COMM label, reflecting the new wave energies of California and the darkness prevalent in the music industry there at the time.

The collective band identity of The Lienkes was formally dissolved in 1982. The band was one (and possibly the first) of the few Oklahoma bands to sustain a regional following over an extended period of years playing primarily our own music. In 1985, *Roger's Back* was released, a sparsely accompanied solo effort made essentially live in the studio with minimal overdubbing. In spite of its title, the work was to serve more as an epilogue to a former era, rather than as a new beginning.

Embarking on a journey of individual and family discovery led to a second career in the mental health field, working with clients in critical transition, as an acute care psychiatric nurse, and as a therapist in private practice. These intertwined and satisfying professional endeavors (healthcare and music) proceeded in parallel with a rewarding marriage, parenthood, and now, grandparenthood. There was an initial extended musical hiatus that allowed for the hyper focus on life in healthcare, in its fledgling stage, to flourish. What followed that break was a return to engaged musical activity, sparked with renewed vigor. The album *Unchained Events*, on Blue Chip Records, heralded a compelling drive to musically proceed.

Throughout the work, the play, and the process not all that much has essentially changed. The central musical issue for me remains my relationship to the songs. My desire is to stay true to that connectedness and step-by-step let what follows speak for itself.

Many albums have been released, and several scores have been composed for musical theater plays. I have continued to write and perform, both alone and collaboratively. Now, hundreds of songs (and other writings) later, combining my brand of front-edge pop with the inspiration of a broad spectrum of musical influences, and with countless hours spent in exercise of instrument and voice, my music seeks to continue facing forward, and hopefully remains unbound by time. I strive to create music that holds up a mirror to the culture we all co-invent and serves to invite us all to see what we see about who we really are.