



Bio information: **MILLER TWINS**

Title: **EARLY COMPOSITIONS 1973 - 1976** (Cuneiform Rune 3368)

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FILE UNDER: **JAZZ / ROCK / EXPERIMENTAL**

***British Invasion and Psychedelic Rock unwound itself in a tizzy as The Beatles began to break up. Hendrix and others died and Syd Barrett evaporated quickly.***

Local inspirations MC-5, SRC, and other promising bands were also coming to an end. Rock as 'new music' became progressive at best, leaving little left but Classic Rock to soon melt into the coming dread of Disco. The tail end of Don Van Vliet was still percolating, but most of our attention now turned towards Bitches Brew, Out to Lunch, Escalator Over the Hill, Erik Satie, Charles Ives, Waiting For Godot, Henry Cow, Sun Ra, Ayler, Ornette, and various expressions of aleatory music.

MARSH CRABBITTS and his CLAPFOLD PLATUNE was a horn-based band Laurence formed in late summer 1972 with a focus on clarinets and saxophones. Its cock-eyed marching band sensibilities took hold rapidly. Homemade compositions were drawn up with hallucinogenic free-form notation applied. The two were 18 at the time with no training as to how one should go about composing. Although some were schooled in music, none were particularly proficient on their instruments. They were known to exclude 'learned' musicians, choosing to play with best friends instead. They may not have had the 'chops' but were clearly willing to openly explore.

Good friend David Swain had formed his own free form jazz collective 'The Cruzonics' earlier that year which amazingly managed to make the 2nd round at Saline Battle of the Bands. Though David's entourage and The Clapfold did intermingle from time to time, The Cruzonics as a separate entity was loose and always had a rhythm section, where as The Clapfold Platune focused solely on original compositions written out on staff paper with pockets of 'illustrated' free-form areas.

The Clapfold Platune managed a few gigs at Earthworks Pioneer II Free School and a couple random outdoor performances on Ann Arbor's Diag. They were also part of a pack that lead Ann Arbor's 1st Ozone Parade with David Swain with their photograph making the front page on the Ann Arbor news. Best of all was a triple bill show at Ann Arbor's The People's Ballroom (along with The Cruzonics) and finally Ann Arbor Community Television's first ever video production ever, converging with The Cruzonics renamed for the occasion as The Psychic Research Jazz Ensemble - ESP through Drugs - in August of 1973.

Laurence & Ben then moved to Boston (with David Swain) where the two attended The School of Contemporary Music in the fall of 1973. They continued composing, rehearsing with open-eared musical friends they met, soon discovering the school experience was not what they had hoped it would be. Contemporary? Nope.

THE CRUZONIC MUSIC ENSEMBLE slowly formed and in February 1974 performed at Berklee College of Music. Disbanding shortly thereafter, Laurence and Ben formed THE NOVA MOB with Donnie Davis and Johnny Ellis - yet another group named after one of William S. Burroughs' novels.



*"I was a student at the Berklee College of Music 1972-74. While learning a lot there I found myself gravitating towards some extracurricular, off-campus musical activities which led me to find the Miller brothers. (perhaps at the encouragement of David Swain?) This homegrown music hit the sweet spot for me. I loved Laurence's and Ben's unique writing / playing style within their naturally derived musical system. We spent many hours working on these wonderful melodies and outlines, hence "The NOVA MOB". Also, we listened to many recordings of past and forward sounding jazz styles along with modern classical/electronic music. This inspired me to later move to Woodstock NY to study at the Creative Music Studio and then NYC to keep discovering new sounds and eventually be a part of the Microscopic Septet playing alto sax. Happy to be included here on a couple tunes that we covered back then and now NOW. Note: Michael Hashim has been with the Microscopic Septet for many years, and was in fact involved jamming with us some back then!"*

- Donnie Davis – 2023

THE NOVA MOB's drummer – the late Johnny Ellis – later performed, recorded, and arranged for THE WIDESPREAD DEPRESSION ORCHESTRA. He also formed his own band PLANET JAZZ;

*"...The debut recording by the New York City based sextet PLANET JAZZ was formed by the late drummer Johnny Ellis who wrote much of the band's music, including 5 of the 8 tracks on their CD IN ORBIT. Ellis' tunes, while reflective of his dark humor, combine true originality with plenty of swing and provide a rich harmonic underpinning for the band's tremendous soloists to stretch out..."*

- Tower Records – 2006

THE NOVA MOB did manage one bar gig. The group walked down to the bar wearing funny clothes all set to perform. The club owner took one look at us and shook his head. We were not allowed to play. Such were the times.

We did manage to record a fair amount of casual sessions over the summer, which may find the light of day, someday. Note: Some of the compositions in this Cuneiform collection were composed at that time.

Moving back to Michigan in fall 1974, we attended Thomas Jefferson College; a part of the Grand Valley State Colleges in the Grand Rapids area. There we formed the short-lived FOURTH WORLD QUARTET with brother Roger in 1975. Compositions began to take on a more sophisticated tone. Roger soon left and was replaced by composition teacher Denman Maroney.

*"Fresh from getting an MFA at Cal. Inst. of the Arts, I spent the academic year 1974-75 teaching at Thomas Jefferson College in Allendale MI. Among my students were Roger, Ben, and Laurence Miller. We made a lot of music together, especially after Roger quit the Fourth World Quartet, and I took his place. We even went to New York together for a week to see the New York Philharmonic under Pierre Boulez celebrate Charles Ives' hundredth birthday. Cushion concerts, they were called, because the first twenty or so rows of seats had been replaced with cushions in an effort to attract young people to classical music concerts. I haven't seen Laurence since then, but have worked with Ben several times in New York, most notably on our duo album Exophilia – available on both our Bandcamp sites."*

- Denman Maroney – 2023

CD collections from both incarnations of THE FOURTH WORLD QUARTET were released nearly five decades later on Cuneiform Records in 2021/22 respectively, meeting rave reviews.

Laurence continued school on his own in the fall of 1975 with hopes of forming yet another creative music band but nothing substantial came of it. By early 1976 Laurence threw in the towel and moved back home to Ann Arbor. There he hooked up with his two brothers again, this time on a creative journey with musical friends forming the dada-noise-rock of EMPOOL. This mad concoction dissolved spring 1977 into Cary & Niagara's DESTROY ALL MONSTERS and the rest is history.

Always pushing the envelope, the music of our youth veered far from the mainstream. The last echoing cries of the '60's Revolution had long since died, and what little counter culture was left had now become nothing short of a disturbing fashion. The Bee Gees soon took center stage, now as the Kings of Disco, and even Hillbillies were smoking pot and dropping acid.



We Miller brothers wrote, recorded, and performed original music, regardless of what the future may hold. No one put a gun to our head nor were these class projects or commissioned works. The priority was to document and catalog on analogue tape, with fingers always hovering just above the record button begging to be pushed. "*Is it on....?*" was our catch phrase of the 70's.

Many of these compositions were written out and can still be performed today. Others are comprised simply of 'heads', short bits of angular melody with areas of improvisation illustrated only with hallucinogenic pictographs to help the player along in their interpretation.

This year Laurence and Ben have both formed new groups. THE 11th HOUR QUARTET and THE SENSORIUM SAXOPHONE ORCHESTRA with Ben at the helm for both, and Laurence's TINN PARROW and his CLAPFOLD PLATUNE sporting many of his compositions on this collection.

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**1 thru 12 composed by Ben Miller**  
**13 thru 30 composed by Laurence Miller**

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**Recorded at Midvale Musique, Ypsilanti, Michigan, December 2022 thru April 2023.**

Love and Pink Whales trilogy:

1) THE JUMPING ANT'S LEGEND composed 1973

2) PLUM BREAKAGE composed 1973

3) OFF TO SEA composed 1974

Ben Miller; alto saxophone, C-tenor saxophone, bass

Laurence Miller; Bb clarinet, bass clarinet, drums

4) JUNE TUNE (a.k.a. The Other Side) composed 1974

Ben Miller; alto saxophone, archtop guitar, bass

Laurence Miller; Bb clarinet, bass clarinet

5) SOFT SHOULDERS composed 1973/76

Ben Miller; Alto saxophone, C-tenor saxophone, bass

Laurence Miller; Alto clarinet, drums

6) SYMPHONY ROAD composed 1974

Ben Miller; alto saxophone, C-tenor saxophone, bass

Laurence Miller; Alto clarinet, drums

Donnie Davis; Alto sax solo

7) INSTANT DEPRIVATION composed 1974

Ben Miller; alto saxophone

Laurence Miller; Bb Clarinet

8) I SAW A FIRE IN YOUR TEETH composed 1974

Ben Miller; alto saxophone, archtop guitar, bass

Laurence Miller; Bb clarinet, bass clarinet, drums



- 9) LOOKING DOWN AT THE GROUND AT THIS AND THAT composed 1974  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, C-tenor saxophone, archtop guitar, bass, voice, maracas  
Laurence Miller; Bb clarinet, drums  
Mike List; tablas
- 10) SUNDAY AFTERNOON composed 1974  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, C-tenor saxophone  
Laurence Miller; alto clarinet  
Denman Maroney; piano
- 11) THE MAUREEN MOBILE composed 1975  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, archtop guitar, bass  
Laurence Miller; bass clarinet
- 12) MILLING composed 1975  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, archtop guitar, bass  
Laurence Miller; bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet  
Denman Maroney; piano
- 13) MAKESHIFT HUB CHEENY composed 1976  
Laurence Miller; vocals, clarinets [Bb, alto, bass], organ, 'air' organ, bass, drums
- 14) HOLD YOUR HORSES composed 1974  
Laurence Miller; clarinets {Bb, alto, bass}, bass, drums  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, C-tenor saxophone, archtop guitar
- 15) HOLLOW WANE composed 1973  
Laurence Miller; vocals, clarinets {Bb, alto, bass}, piano, bass, drums  
Ben Miller; C-tenor saxophone  
Frank Pahl; euphonium
- 16) ODD BALL composed 1974  
Laurence Miller; clarinets {Bb, alto, bass}, synth piano, bass, drums  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, C-tenor saxophone
- 17) OBSIDIAN BASE composed 1975  
Laurence Miller; vocals, bass clarinet, organ, bass, drums  
Frank Pahl; euphonium
- 18) GAD ZUKES composed 1975  
Laurence Miller; vocals, bass clarinet, piano, bass, drums  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone solo  
Denman Maroney; piano
- 19) CHUMPSKY'S LINE composed 1975  
Laurence Miller; vocals, Bb clarinet, bass clarinet, piano, 'air' organ, bass, drums, found sound  
Ben Miller; C-tenor saxophone



20) TURN A LEFT AND DOWN THE HALL composed 1975

Laurence Miller; vocals, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, synth-glockenspiel, archtop guitar, bass, drums, maraca  
Frank Pahl; euphonium

21) ORGANIZED ANYTHING composed 1974

Laurence Miller; vocals, bass clarinet, 'air' organ, bass, drums  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, C-tenor saxophone, archtop guitar

22) ALL BATTERY SEED {'fake live'} composed 1974

Laurence Miller; vocals, Bb clarinet, bass clarinet, bass, drums  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, archtop guitar  
Denman Maroney; piano  
Donnie Davis; alto saxophone solo

23) PANDA PAWS ARE COMING TO TOWN composed 1974

Laurence Miller; vocals, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, bass, drums, sleigh bells, referee whistle  
Denman Maroney; piano solo  
Frank Pahl; euphonium {sampled}

24) BREAKING THE NEWS (Boil Kroft) composed 1974

Laurence Miller; vocals, alto clarinet, organ, bass, drums, found sound (Kroger's bags, magazine, piano bench, etc)  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone

25) FROM OUT OF COVER composed 1974

Laurence Miller; vocals, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, bass clarinet 'mouthpiece', bass, drums  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, archtop guitar

26) IMPLIED SURFACE DISTORTOISE composed 1974-75

Laurence Miller; vocals, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, piano, synth piano, bass, snare, tambourine, hand-claps, [star-trek guitar @ the end – ripped from the original demo ~ recorded January 1975]  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone, C-tenor saxophone  
Frank Pahl; euphonium

27) CLOCK CODA composed 1975

Laurence Miller; vocals, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, piano (some prepared), archtop guitar, bass, drums, squeaky door  
Ben Miller: alto saxophone, prepared archtop guitar

28) BATT MASTERDONN composed 1975

Laurence Miller; bass clarinet, 'air' organ, bass, drums, triangle, maracas, party favor, various toy whistles

29) THE COMPLEMENTARY COMMENTARY ON AQUEOUS HUMOR composed 1975

Laurence Miller; vocals, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, organ, bass, drums, maracas, tambourine, triangle, cow horn  
'gasp'

30) DRIFT THOUGHT composed 1974

Laurence Miller; clarinets {Bb, alto, bass}, piano 'inside', 'air' organ, cymbals  
Ben Miller; alto saxophone