

06.25.09

I'm sitting in a hotel room in Carlsbad, New Mexico. It is 9 p.m. The TV has been on CNN all evening covering the death of Michael Jackson. My thoughts this morning started with my Mother, who was born on this day and is 10 years gone. Then the news of Sky Saxon of The Seeds passing came over the Internet followed by the sad end of Farrah Fawcett's battle with cancer. Of course all of this news was squashed by the juggernaut of Jacko's demise.

You are probably wondering what the hell any of this has to do with Peter. So am I.

It has been said Peter might have been bisexual, that he was a lefty that played the guitar right-handed, that he was moody and...wait a minute...that's what they say about me! Only one of those things might be true. Anyway, let's get to the matter at hand.

I had known of Peter for a long time before I actually met him. He was renowned for being in many well-known bands around Cleveland and for his writings in local music magazines. He had come to see the band I was in a few times and then approached me to join Rocket From The Tombs. He sealed the deal with me when he invited me to his apartment where he cooked a chicken dinner for me. So I thought being in two cool bands at the same time would be really great. (It didn't last too long as I was summarily dismissed from the first band for playing with the second band, or something like that.) I soon came to realize what an extraordinary musician Peter was. He could pick up almost any style and meld it into something excitingly unique. I was

also in awe of Peter's dogged determination once he set his mind to doing something. I always remember him plowing forward, unafraid and chin first, sometimes to unfortunate results. This led to some interesting adventures with Peter. A trip to Michigan to play Lester Bangs our tape, the same tape he and I took to 'MMS when, somehow, it had been fanagled to get our music on the air. I had been sent along by the band to "keep an eye on Peter". Good luck with that, I thought. Lester loved the tape and he and Peter founded a mutual admiration society. We ended up at John Sinclair's house. I don't know why. My first trip to CBGB's was with Peter in '75. We saw The Ramones and Blondie, wandered around Talking Heads' loft until we were asked to leave for some unbeknownst-to-me indiscretion, winding up at Richard Hell's apartment where intense discussions were held. We stayed up all night, for many nights. We played music, we talked about the world and what we were going to do about it. We had a very good time.

Then the band broke up. Things started to get tense, I was indirectly asked by Peter to move out of the apartment he, his wife Charlotte, and I shared downtown by his father in an extremely unpleasant phone conversation. I moved out and saw less and less of Peter. He continued with Pere Ubu and then a number of groups he would assemble and dis-assemble seemingly monthly. In late '76 as I prepared to move to Connecticut and, despite the fact that Peter and I hadn't spoken to each other much in the past year, (whenever we did there was an unfortunate tenseness brought on by the preceding events of the band and such plus the inability of either of us to speak our true feelings to the other), he generously let us borrow his car to make the trip. We got the phone call in June of '77. Peter was

gone. Normally this would be where I'd say that was the last I saw of him. However that is not quite true. I had heard about how he had been spiralling downward for some time, even before leaving Cleveland. I was more saddened than shocked. Then the weirdness set in. Our phone went out immediately after that call. The reason, we found later, being our cat urinating on the wall plug. By the time we had the phone repaired, Peters' services had completed; I didn't even send a card. Shortly afterward Lynn and I were sleeping in our apartment when we both woke to see Peter standing in the doorway of the room, watching us. He gave us a chance to say goodbye. Nearly 30 years passed; on a visit to Cleveland I finally went to the cemetery where Peter was laid to rest to let him know I remembered, and I still cared.

We all go through this life at whatever speed and length it takes to get to the next level. What we do here may or may not matter to many, Some will be revered for eons, some merely cast aside as just another pixel in the big picture. Whatever place we are found in does not mean we did not touch someone, somewhere, somehow. Just because our passing doesn't elicit a major outpouring of punditry and hysteria, it doesn't mean what we do and how we lived has no value. Peter lived a short life from where I write this...yet his body of work here shows he crammed that period, however short, with a massive amount of energy and emotion that many of us could not accomplish if we had a century to do so. His works still ring in my ears, and just like the laugh of my Mother, as long as they are there they have never really left me. No matter how long it has been.