

“Tales of the Plague”



We had seen it coming for a month. On March 16, 2020, I played to an empty room in a normally-slammin' jazz kitchen in Philly and knew life as I had been enjoying it was ending.

In 2019, I had about 300 gigs in the accounting book by the end of the year. I was doing a lot of solo piano, and belonged to 4 groups: Musical Collusion, my original funk/jazz project with Carl Cox on saxes, Josh Orlando on drums, and Andy Lalasis on bass; Ronstadt Revue, a Linda Ronstadt tribute project with Gesenia Erolin on lead vocals; The Divine Hand Ensemble, an esoteric classical group consisting of thereminist Mano Divina with a string quintet, 2 harps, marimba/vibes, flute, and me on accordion; and the Paula Johns Quartet with Paula backed by me, Andy Lalasis, and Grant MacAvoy. In addition, I sat in on a lot of gigs and recorded with The Hot Club of Philadelphia, a gypsy jazz ensemble led by Django acolyte Barry Wahrhaftig; various jazz trios+ led by George Torrella in the Lehigh Valley area; one-offs with various classical ensembles in the Philly area doing ballet productions/ Christmas shows/ live soundtracks; and various jazz groups in need of keys for a night.

In an instant, it was all gone. I dared to venture out in July for an outside gig with The Hot Club, then scurried back into my hole, resolving to stay there

until it was safe. It was the beginning of May 2021 before I played another note in public. But the past 14 months had proved to be the most creative and prolific year I've ever had in my musical life. Not having to entertain people in a live crowd, and being given total freedom and unlimited time, I found myself working harder in the studio than I ever could have before. As I looked at the number of musical pieces on my hard drive, I knew I had to release some of it properly, give it a final buffing that I hadn't done, and feature my friends who were kind enough to indulge me as I pursued this work: the members of the Ronstadt Revue, Musical Collusion, the Paula Johns Quartet, and my son Miles.

So, here's the result, "Tales of the Plague". I hope you enjoy the breadth of styles and the jaundiced attitude behind a lot of this. I give a heartfelt and deep thanks to every one of the incredibly talented people that I had the chance to play with online this year, assembling these pieces in Frankensteinian fashion, but feeling their musical souls all the same!

- *Dave Hartl, October 2021*

The Tunes:

The Zen Cabby (Hartl) (5:27)

In January 2020, I had a Saturday night cab ride through midtown Manhattan with a verbose and enlightened driver from Pakistan. He gave me a new appreciation of being a musician, and a glow that lasted for weeks.

Carl Cox: saxes

Miles Hartl: guitar

Josh Orlando: drums

DH: Chapman Stick, synths:

Dave Smith Instruments Prophet Rev2

Waldorf Blofeld

Behringer CAT

Moog Subharmonic

Korg Wavedrum

U-he Zebra

Arturia: Clavinet V, Arp 2600

Propellerheads Reason: Thor, Dr. Rex

MOTU Ethno

Stylus RMX

Fungit (Hartl) (4:42)

Musical Collusion is my funky jazz band who released our album “Guilty As Charged” just before the pandemic hit. Here’s one of the tunes I wrote during the pandemic with a future project with them in mind. Just another funky jam tune.

Carl Cox: saxes

Josh Orlando: drums

DH: Steinberger bass, synths:

Moog Sub 37

Roland RD-700

U-he ACE
Arturia Modular V3, B3V2

Favela (Antonio Carlos Jobim) (3:30)

I used a lot of time in the lockdown to practice and improve my secondary instruments. Here's a little-played Jobim number that I've grown fond of.

Josh Orlando: hand percussion

DH: Chapman Stick, D'Angelico guitar

Daddy Wallets (Hartl) (4:53)

Here's a tune I wrote about always being the one to reach for cash when we're out and about.

Carl Cox: saxes

Miles Hartl: guitar

Josh Orlando: drums

DH: Chapman Stick, synths:

Moog Sub 37

Moog Subharmonic

Dave Smith Instruments Prophet Rev2

Behringer CAT

MOTU BassLine

Native Instruments Kontakt: Rhythmic Robot Soviet Organ
and Loopscape, Sonic Couture Rocksichord

Arturia: Clavinet V, Vox Continental V2, & Synclavier V

U-he Zebra2

Waldorf PPG Wave 3.V

Spectrasonics Stylus RMX

Breath of Helios (Hartl) (7:01)

In the midst of the pandemic, I felt the need for a moment of peace and rest. And a chance to play fretless bass.

DH: Fender fretless Jazz bass, synths:

Moog Subharmonicon

Dave Smith Instruments Prophet Rev2

Dave Smith Instruments OB-6

Forsooth (Hartl/ Orlando) (6:29)

Acquiring a Behringer CAT synthesizer allowed me to revisit the '70's, when I bought my first synthesizer, an Octave CAT. As long as I had a vintage sound, I figured I would write a 13/8 tune a la Soft Machine. Josh Orlando killed the odd meters and made this work as a piece of music.

Josh Orlando: drums

DH: synths:

Moog Subharmonicon

Behringer CAT

Yamaha CP4

Dave Smith Instruments Prophet Rev2

Dave Smith Instruments OB-6

Roli Seaboard with Equator

G-Force ImpOscar

Roland System 8

Arturia Vox Continental V2

NI Kontakt: Rhythmic Robot Steam Punk

Audio Damage Quanta

Soledad (Astor Piazzolla) (7:26)

I've been doing arrangements of Frank Zappa and Astor Piazzolla for a 21st-Century classical group called the Divine Hand Ensemble, and I adapted one of those arrangements for a solo showcase for accordion.

DH: Roland FR-8x V-Accordion, synths:

Arturia: Synclavier V, OB-Xa V

Native Instruments Kontakt

Garritan Personal Orchestra 5

Heart Like a Wheel (Anna McGarrigle) (3:01)

A beautiful tune done as a duet with Gesenia Erolin, the vocalist with whom I play in the Ronstadt Revue, the best Linda Ronstadt tribute band out there.

Gesenia Erolin: vocal

DH: Yamaha CP4, Steinberger bass, Dave Smith

Instruments Prophet Rev2

Estaté (Bruno Martin) (5:01)

This is another Chapman Stick/ guitar due, one of my favorite bossas.

DH: Chapman Stick, D'Angelico guitar

Little Orange Fingers (Hartl) (5:41)

This one came to me fully formed while walking along some abandoned railroad tracks, balancing on the rails and hopping over the trestles. The uneven rhythm became the tune. The guys from Musical Collusion step up to make it funky.

Carl Cox: saxes

Josh Orlando: drums

DH: synths:

Moog Sub 37
Dave Smith Instruments OB-6
Arturia Modular V3, Prophet V3
G-Force Oddity 2
Xils lab PolyM

Ready Step RBG (Hartl) (2:05)

On the day when Ruth Bader Ginsberg was laid in state in the Capitol, the pall bearers had a striking cadence as they climbed the steps. Hearing it, I immediately heard this tune, Josh Orlando jumping in the action.

Josh Orlando: drums

DH: Steinberger bass, synths:

Moog Subharmonicon
Moog Sub 37
Dave Smith Instruments Prophet Rev2

最高

Saikou (Hartl) (4:34) (adapted from Bernard Herrmann, by way of Laika & the Cosmonauts)

I really, really wanted to do a tune with the striking sounds of the Vox Continental organ. I also love Bernard Herrmann's film scores, and borrowed the approach of Laika and the Cosmonauts to bring some Psycho into it.

Carl Cox: saxes

Josh Orlando: drums

DH: synths:

Roland RD-700
Moog Mother-32
Arturia: Vox Continental V2, Wurli V2, Mini V3

Native Instruments Kontakt

You're My Humpty (Chick Corea) (4:16)

Paula Johns also did a number of online concerts during the lockdown, for which I arranged two of Chick Corea's pieces ("You're My Everything" and "Humpty Dumpty") into a medley. We unexpectedly lost Chick soon after arranging this, making this one even more meaningful to me.

Paula Johns: vocals

Grant MacAvoy: drums

DH: Roland RD-700, synths:

Arturia: Mini V

Native Instruments Kontakt

I Don't Know What I Said, I Don't Remember (Hartl) (4:04)

I'll make no apologies; Donald Trump was the worst thing that could have happened to us during this critical year. Here's his hate-filled speech against a disabled reporter, made into a big band jam. I'm trying to make lemonade out of a really rancid lemon here.

Josh Orlando: drums

Donald Trump: vocal

DH: synths:

Moog Sub 37

Dave Smith Instruments Prophet Rev2

Dave Smith Instruments OB-6

Arturia: Vox Continental V2, Mini V3

Garritan Personal Orchestra 5

G-Force: ImpOscar

NI Kontakt: Bolder Sounds Electric Sitar, bass module

All arrangements and production by Dave Hartl

Additional mixing and all mastering by **Dave Schonauer** at
Morningstar Studio, East Norriton, PA

Artwork by Dave Hartl

Plague Doctor photography and artwork by Skulls-N-Gears.com.
Check them out!

“Favela” by Antonio Carlos Jobim

“Soledad” by Astor Piazzolla

“Heart Like a Wheel” by Anna McGarrigle

“Estaté” by Bruno Martino

“You’re My Everything” and “Humpty Dumpty” by Chick Corea

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For a lot of the tunes on this album, there are videos available.
Just go to YouTube and find my channel at
<https://www.youtube.com/c/davehartlmusician>.

And all my albums are available at
<https://davehartl.bandcamp.com>, with lots more information
and links at <http://www.davehartl.com/originalmusic.html> .
Thanks for listening and watching!