

Discovering guitar turns jazz legend's son on to music

Growing up as the son of legendary jazz trumpeter Don Cherry, Eagle-Eye Cherry had a wealth of musical influences and instruments available to him.

But it wasn't until he returned to his birthplace, Stockholm, Sweden, to be with his girlfriend that he found his musical calling.

"The first apartment that we

borrowed had an acoustic guitar. I hadn't messed around with it before. In my home, we had all the instruments except for that. That was the key to the door of my career," Cherry explained.

"It's a great, great instrument — for me and also for writing. It's like having a good friend."

That discovery led to his debut album, "Desireless" (The Work

Group), a collection of acoustic guitar-driven, memorable pop songs that has already gone platinum in Sweden. He dabbles in funk a bit ("Incision"), but other than that there's little of his late father's influence in "Desireless."

"I think that's definitely me. Being around the business and behind the scenes, I know the

importance of making music that's exactly what you want to be doing," Cherry said.

"You have to play the songs for a year and you have to talk about it for a year. I didn't want to make a record that didn't feel right. Especially on the first album, I think very often it ends up being a little bit of a producer's or A&R man's product. But with me, this is it. This is what I've been wanting to do for this whole time. I realized it's important to take your time. You only got one chance at a first impression."

Cherry made his first impression May 7, 1970, in Stockholm to Don and artist Miki Cherry.

"The best memories I have are of my dad sitting by the piano playing music, good food being cooked, and lots of good vibes. There were a lot of really, really good people around at that time. That generation of musicians is

quite special," Cherry explained.

"We traveled a lot. My dad brought us out on tour, mostly through Europe. It was very special."

"Us" included half-sister Neneh Cherry, who was born Neneh Mariann Karlsson in 1964 to West African percussionist Amadu Jah and Miki Cherry. Neneh, best known for her 1980s hit "Buffalo Stance," and Eagle-Eye Cherry along with Don and Miki Cherry moved to New York City when Eagle-Eye was 14.

"A few years ago" Cherry left New York for Stockholm where he found the inspiration for his album.

Coupled with hip-hop beats and slide guitar, Cherry and his half-sister Titiyo Jah, an R&B star in Sweden, duet on "Worried Eyes," a confession of his love for

his girlfriend.

The music for the title track was written by his father who died Oct. 19, 1995, in Malaga, Spain. The album is dedicated to his father.

"I probably would've had a Don Cherry song on the album regardless of whether he had passed away. When he died it was very sad but he lived such a full life. It was really a kick in my butt to get to work. You don't know when you're going to go and I know I haven't done what I wanna do in this life so I better get to work on it."

Eagle-Eye Cherry performs Wednesday, Aug. 26, at the 7th House, 7 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. Doors open at 8 p.m. for the 18 and older show. Tickets are \$7 in advance. For more information, call (248) 335-8100 or visit <http://www.961melt.com>. Eagle-Eye Cherry's web site is <http://www.eagle-eyecherry.com>.

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expressive, elaborately costumed pantomime puppets and a hand-mouth, Muppet-type character who introduces the show.

Lester operates from a red trailer. He can set up an instant stage from the side of the trailer with lights and sound built in. Lester also has a somewhat more elaborate stage that he can set up inside a school auditorium that takes about 40 minutes to assemble.

"It allows me to creatively do everything," he said, "script writer, choreography, set design, set construction, sound guy, performer. It allows me to do what I want. It allows me to use philosophy."

Lester's "Jack in the Beanstalk" is subtitled "A Tale of Good Over Evil." He said he

always emphasize that his stories take a turn away from the traditional sources. He said in the original "Jack," the hero is a thief who ends up killing the giant.

"In my tale, Jack goes on an adventure. He gets the beans from the spirit of his grandfather and he finds a cruel giant who has been stealing from others. In this story Jack is rewarded for doing the right thing," Lester said. "We try to put forth good messages for kids."

The young puppet master has been sending out brochures and calling around to schools and

libraries. He's found a receptive market. By mid-July he had already done 38 shows and is booked through September. He is developing a "Thumbelina" with a girl main character.

Lester still has other acting dreams. He is planning on doing voice overs to use his versatile gift for mimicry, and he would like to explore film acting.

But, for now, he's the master of his puppet domain with plans to do more than 100 shows throughout Michigan in the coming school year.

Lester can be reached at (248)693-6616.

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