

## Tribute to Miro Jugum

Parker Gambino - September, 2025

This month's remembrance is a departure, for departed from our presence is one of our own, Miro Jugum. Like other tributes, I can relate only a fraction of a whole, the portion that was a small overlap, instances whittled down even to a single point providing an anchor for personal tangency and digression.

Miro's life arc is summarized in the several on-line obituaries and tributes (linked below) that serve as sources for those portions of the following account that lie beyond my points of personal tangency. Now, of course, they can no longer be substantiated in what would be the most favored manner. Like Kurt Cobain, Miro was a native of Aberdeen (at the mouth of the Chehalis River in Gray's Harbor County). He eventually came to occupy the space at the intersection of archivist, musician, historian, raconteur. Those of us who share that space (and I count myself as one such) got there by sharing a profound sense of value for each of those callings, and a disregard, dare I say disdain, for the vulgar contemporary concepts of value, based on greed, which degrade our spiritual lives.

To provide context for the kindred-spiritedness of this tribute, as well as the lack of restraint for my own idiosyncratic excesses and tangential excursions, it is helpful to pivot here to a consideration of the two sides of a single coin, devotion and obsession. For whatever distinction exists between these notions, I find them fundamentally linked. The passions that drive devotion/obsession do not occupy the same psychological/spiritual plane as rationality; our concession to this conundrum of reality is a term acknowledging a forced, perhaps illusory, fit: rationalization. With passion there is a brand of certainty; one does not hold back. From passion we receive the richnesses of life, with hope for betterment. Devotion? Obsession? Only slightly upstream from the flow of my posters for open mic, and from the musical ocean of Miro Jugum. Having now sufficiently examined the navel, I declare it to be an "innie".

Miro was proud of, and very engaged with, his Croatian heritage. He freely stream-of-consciousness-ed his way from mention of those spotted fire-house dogs (Dalmations) to himself, a scion of the Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic Sea. He made frequent visit to Croatia, where significant portions of his family reside.

Miro took to music at an early age, apparently starting with clarinet; from there he constructed a soundtrack for life, assembled from his fandom, peddling of wares in several commercial venues, personal photography and audio recordings, performances, deep-dive research, and overall non-stop enthusiasm. He kept a detailed log of musical performances that he attended, starting with an Iron Butterfly appearance (Aug. 6, 1974) at the Hoquiam Junior High School gym (PSOCT = personal stream-of-consciousness tangent: the Iron Butterfly album "Heavy", released in 1968, not only ushered that particular musical term into the broader consciousness, it was my initial exposure to a well-covered song that made its way

onto the set list of my first band, "Get Out Of My Life, Woman" by Allen Toussaint). Miro's FaceBook page provided a feature along the lines of "This Day In History/Celebrities Sharing This Birthday"; it listed, by calendar date, the thousands of performances that Miro attended over the years. You could actually check to see if you and he had experienced the same concert! (Unfortunately, I was not able to find these archived records on a recent FB foray).

Miro also kept detailed records of his own performances (numbering greater than 700 over the past 10 years) at various venues, listing the songs played at each occasion, so as to never do the same tune twice at any location. Hence the moniker, "No-Repeat Miro". Sunset Hill Community Hall was a late-comer to the Seattle open-mic world, so there were perhaps a dozen Miro appearances there; at the long-established open-mic sessions at The Uncouth Buzzard (bookstore), Miro performed 165 times! (PSOCT I could have very well played at one of those back during an early Seattle visit in the late twenty-teens).

Miro had some clear favorites, definitely Neil Young and Townes Van Zandt, and he harvested broadly from their catalogues, especially Young's. But at one open-mic he surprised me by guaranteeing to play the oldest song of the night; there was clearly no competition once he launched into an olde English folksong (sorry, we would need to consult his set-list archives for a title) that involved some unfortunate aspects and outcomes of a doomed romance, as so many of them do. Come to think of it, I'm not aware if Miro was a songwriter; I can't recall him introducing any works as original at the open mics I attended.

The one and only time that I saw Miro wearing long pants, I asked him what had happened to his knees! The look on his face morphed from "Huh?" to "Oh yeah, right."

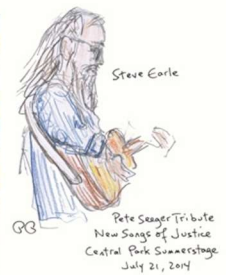
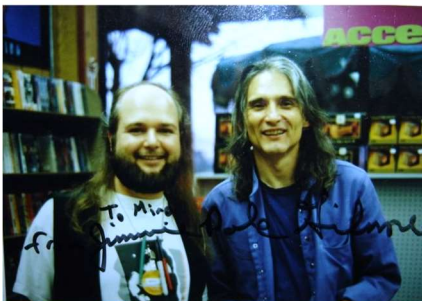
Miro employed a pronounced strumming attack on the guitar strings; from my imprecise recollection, I think he shunned the use of picks of any kind (contrasting so with my snowflake hands). He knew how to get lyrics clearly projected into the microphone. After one of my open mic three-song sets, Miro's observation was of my use of complex chords up and down the guitar neck, whereas he stuck to the "cowboy chords", a term not coined by him, but that was the first time I'd heard it, and the meaning was instantaneously grasped.

More edifying for me were the sparkles of minutiae that he contributed regarding both his own material and whatever the other players were offering, connecting dots or filling in knowledge gaps. In the relaxed, borderline-raucous audience participation that characterizes open mic at OUR venue, sometimes a curious question was resolved with the refrain, "Let's ask Miro, he'll know". Or, an impromptu correction might be called out *ad hoc*. Thus it was a feather in my cap whenever I could stump him on some trivia or other. (PSOCT, one example, I think, was "Who charted a single covering Paul Simon's 59th Street Bridge Song?" Answer: "Harpers Bizarre"). I'm content, though, to yield the overall trivia crown for our collected genres to Miro, while fiercely defending the respectability of my runner-up status, at least at SHCH. Also, at one point the topic of palindromes came up - a word or sentence that reads the same forwards or backwards. Miro supplied an astonishing one that I now keep at the ready, "Go hang a salami, I'm a lasagna hog"!

When I was the fill-in MC for an SHCH open mic evening, I distinctly remember getting publicly schooled about Ry Cooder's musical lineage, which I had stated began with Captain Beefheart; Miro was all "Not so..." and corrected by mentioning Cooder's prior membership in Rising Sons, which also launched the career of Taj Mahal (PSOCT, I have sketched TM, but no autograph). Likewise when I said that Peter Green was the original guitar player of Fleetwood Mac, Miro pointed out that early FM lineup included two other guitarists, Jeremy Spencer and Danny Kirwan. Well, it was not until doing research for this tribute that I discovered that I missed the opportunity to parry about all of that, because the first Fleetwood Mac album was subtitled "Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac", that he had put together the group, and that Kirwan was not even on the first album. So there!

Arguments (or should we call them precise clarifications?) with Miro about the tiniest facets of fact was ALWAYS conducted in a spirit of joy and bonhomie. What a kind, gentle, positive soul! You will not find anything negative about him in his entire web presence. And Miro gives me license to unfetter the solipsistic conjured PSOCT details that pepper this account, being very much in the spirit of his discourses.

Let us now renew our focus on the activity of archiving, as both Miro and I travel on parallel tracks. From his vinyl-peddling days, numerous opportunities came Miro's way to attend performances of famous musicians, and to hang out with them, documented with versions of selfies. Check out his FaceBook site! Of course he kept track of all of these. On the other hand, I go to gigs, do my sketches (no posing), and then solicit autographs from the players. My "hang-time" with them is usually limited to obtaining this final by-their-hand touch, unless some evident interest in having a more substantial conversation emerges. Sometimes there are selfies, but not due to my urging. Nonetheless, from that day forward I retain a cachet of interest about the career of that musician, and I like to crow, "Yeah, I sketched him/her!" As in Taj Mahal. So of course I would seek the Venn diagram overlap of Miro's selfies (at least the ones on FaceBook) and my sketch archives, and there are two: Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Steve Earle.



My typical (nearly exclusive) *modus operandi* is to capture moments *en plein air*-style, relying on neither photos, sketches, nor memory. I had never sketched Miro performing, so for this month my sketch is based on photos and memories. The last open mic that I shared with Miro was on May 16, 2025. Immediately prior to that event, a photo was taken by Clay Eals, which included many of the evening's performers. It accompanied his Seattle Times article celebrating SHCH's acquisition of landmark status. Might this be among the final photographs of Miro Jugum, standing front and center behind the sign proclaiming "Live Music", holding his guitar? I am so proud to be standing to his immediate left, holding mine.



### Links

<https://www.facebook.com/miro.jugum>

<https://www.thedailyworld.com/obituaries/miro-anton-jugum/>

<https://www.seattletimes.com/pacific-nw-magazine/at-more-than-700-open-mics-no-repeat-miro-never-sang-a-tune-twice/>

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DLGlbWmPc9C/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1110595615993343/posts/2569242633461960/>