Remembering Patrick Gleeson

Picture: Zeke Dickson

On behalf of the estate of Patrick Gleeson, the Bob Moog Foundation shares the passing of the legendary electronic music pioneer. Patrick Gleeson passed away on July 19, 2026; he was 91 years old. Gleeson may be best remembered as the owner of Different Fur Studios, and for his subsequent work with Herbie Hancock. ? However, his career stretched well beyond those accomplishments, including producing and engineering for a multitude of musicians, recording solo albums, scoring soundtracks, and performing live.

In the 1960s, Patrick Gleeson moved to San Francisco to teach 18th-Century English Literature at San Francisco State University. Soon thereafter he began experimenting with electronic music on the Buchla Box at the San Francisco Tape Music Center. He eventually resigned from teaching and became a full-time musician. In 1968, after being inspired by Switched-On Bach by Wendy Carlos, he began using a large Moog III modular synthesizer and co-founded Different Fur recording studio, with his studio partner John Vieira, until 1985. There, he worked with Herbie Hancock on Hancock's Crossings (1972) and Sextant (1973) albums, which led to Gleeson going on tour with Hancock’s Mwandishi band, where he

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helped pioneer the use of synthesizers in live performance, and in the jazz medium, using the ARP 2600. He later became one of Hancock's full-time band members. Hancock later credited Gleeson with introducing him to synthesizers. Hancock's albums Sextant and Headhunters were both recorded at Different Fur studio.

After supporting the work of many other musicians across genres, including David Byrne, Charles Earl, Brian Eno, Sammy Hagar, Eddie Henderson, Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Kronos Quartet, Benny Maupin, Pat Metheny, Julian Priester, Michael Shrieve, and Lenny White, Gleeson went on to record several solo albums. The first was Beyond the Sun – An Electronic Portrait of Holst's "The Planets" in 1976, featuring the E-mu polyphonic synthesizer. The album was nominated for the 1977 Grammy Award for Best Engineered Album, Classical. Wendy Carlos wrote the sleeve notes for the album and noted, "Our eight-year wait for someone else to explore electronic music realization with what we judge to be appropriate technical standards and musical taste has ended," she wrote, adding: "In short, one hears the ears of a gifted musician at work, in a field where one must exercise unprecedented discipline and self-control."

That album was followed by: Patrick Gleeson's Star Wars (1977), Rainbow Delta (1980), Patrick Gleeson Antonio Vivaldi: The Four Seasons (1981), The Plague Dogs (original soundtrack) (1982), Slide (2007), and Patrick Gleeson / Jim Lang: Jazz Criminal - Featuring Bennie Maupin, Wallace Roney (2007), Driving While Black with Bennie Maupin (2014), Fourever (2021), The Rainbow Delta (2022).

Gleeson produced or played on over 100 albums. He served as a producer and engineer on the 1978 Devo album Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!, some of which was recorded at Different Fur. His work on David Byrne & Brian Eno's radically groundbreaking "My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts" is testament to his production and editing skills. Gleeson's scoring credits include a number of film soundtracks, including The Plague Dogs, Apocalypse Now, Crossroads and The Bedroom Window. He is credited as the Master Synthesist on Francis Coppola's Apocalypse Now. He has scored nine television series, including Knots Landing. Gleeson's scores for artist Bruce Conner are in the permanent collections of the Walker Art Center, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and The Museum of Modern Art.

In 2017 he retired from film and television scoring and returned to live performance, both as a solo artist and with a trio (Michael Shrieve, drums, and Sam Morrison, reeds). He performed at the Cutting Room in New York City in 2018, at Moogfest in 2019, and with KamranV at Synthplex in 2022. He was the featured guest at the Moogseum's fourth year anniversary celebration in 2023. Gleeson's final years of performance and composition involved exploring the possibilities offered by Ableton and other software, and working with quad and multi-channel audio. He is survived by his wife, Charmaine McClarie, of 34 years.

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