

ALL YOU EVER REALLY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MODES

Discussions about musical modes appear on the IRTRAD list with distressing regularity. It's not that the discussions are not relevant as much as they are utterly devoid of any redeeming social value. In any event I posted this in 1997 in an effort to bring the whole matter to a healthy conclusion. I failed.

Note: sexual references - not many to begin with, alas - have been removed at the insistence of the American Academy of Musicologists. However that has not stopped the Zouki Cultural Labs from offering a special "Spicy Adult Footnote Package" to those qualifying as "genuine mode freaks". See our website www.zoukilabs.com for details (and prepare to have proof of age handy).

The five original modes were the Androgynous, Bubonic, Carthusian, Derranian, and Eucalyptic. All except the Derranian were quickly abandoned when it was discovered that they required a nine-note scale (although you could get away with eight and a half in the Eucalyptic if you had to).

The reason for this anomaly was never made clear, but after an initial flurry of curiosity during the first few months of 43 BC, no one really seemed too interested in pursuing the matter further. The Greek philosopher Ktesiphon (or "the big K", as his friends used to call him) reportedly wrote a lengthy treatise explaining the wholeness, but most of the scrolls comprising the only extant copy of this work were erased and re-used for a collection of really dirty Corinthian limericks. (E.g., "A daring young girl from Mycenae / Wore naught but a bright purple beanie," etc. etc. - the translation work continues, enthusiastically).

The Derranian mode survives today, but it is used primarily by box players blessed (cursed?) with seven fingers on each hand, for which reason it is also referred to as the Polydactylic. (Cats may also experience this condition, but surprisingly it does not seem to enhance their accordion-playing abilities.)

Other relatively fascinating mode facts:

- Efforts by Pythagorean mystics to unite the properties of the mathematical relationship between a circle's radius and its circumference with the arrangement of musical tones led to history's first known example of pi a la mode.
- Playing of tunes in the Euthanasian (also known as the Kevorkian) mode

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is not presently permitted within the city limits of Columbus, Ohio (but is encouraged in Michigan - go figure!!)

- Bodhráns are usually played in the "duh" mode (also called the Jurassic mode), which consists of two notes (duh and DUH) and a rimshot. This is believed to be the most ancient mode, according to some experts predating even the Amoebic, which apparently makes it pretty doggone old.

- Britney Spears, Edgar Allan Poe, Ethelred the Unready, and Fidel Castro were all born to women whose first names rhymed with various edible fungi - and whose initials comprise the first four notes of the Cetacean mode!! Coincidence...??

- *Newsweek* magazine recently reported that secret Chinese slave labor camps were heavily involved in reproducing counterfeit modes in violation of all cultural treaties. "We know nothing of this," said spokesperson Wei Lin Chung, "and we accept no responsibility for interference in your decadent Western music. Long live Socialist pentatonicity!"

- Biologists recently discovered that removing the two hind legs from a certain species of Amazonian frog resulted in a noticeable change in its mating call. Musicologists who should have known better have christened the new note series the "Slowed Toad Mode".

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I hear the phone ringing. I hope it's a telemarketer - I get so lonely sometimes.

