

Bill Milbrodt
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PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Bill Milbrodt is a composer and sound designer known for his innovative explorations into the technology and mechanics of music. After a brief career start in marketing and media, he moved quickly into music and video production. He eventually created the "Car Music Project", a band that plays music on instruments made from car parts. Today, he is also writing and directing videos with a focus on both visual effects and video journalism.

As a video director, Milbrodt continues to noodle with the language of media: He tends to fuse real world and contrived elements to create uniquely affected environments. Similarly, as a sound designer he often selects sounds for their contrasts, or creates sounds from wholly unexpected sources, and carefully tunes them. The result is a continuum that gives clarity to each sound and a well-defined place in the storytelling scheme.

As founder of the Car Music Project, Milbrodt directed the creation of an ensemble of alternative musical instruments from disassembled car parts. He then set about composing a suite of original music that took advantage of the quirky and unusual tonal characters of these "instruments".

The Car Music Project has performed under Milbrodt's direction at New York City's Lincoln Center and other venues. His concept proved so intriguing that he was retained by Ford of Europe's advertising team to supervise the creation of playable instruments from a newly released Ford Focus for an iconic European TV commercial. They later went on a live tour of the UK that included a performance at Royal Albert Hall.

In 1991 Milbrodt won an Emmy Award in New York for Outstanding Original Music Composition for his distinctive electronic score for the short feature

American Venus. Within his score source sound effects momentarily replace drums, the percussion track fuses with the melody at times, and multiple melodic elements leap over, around, and on top of each other, all while locked to the action almost organically.

As the owner of Music & Sound Design Studio, one of the first commercial music and sound studios to adopt hard disk recording, Milbrodt used digital technology to create music and sounds featured on ESPN, at EPCOT Center, on the official Anne Rice web site, in Olympic kiosks, and within Wii, Nintendo, and Playstation games. He also produced more than 500 educational audio programs for Simon and Schuster.

Milbrodt has been a guest speaker at Coventry University (UK), the College of New Jersey, and other institutions. He has appeared in Top Gear magazine, NJ Monthly, the Times of London, Advertising Age, and Wired; and as a press spokesman for Ford of Europe on CBS Sunday Morning, CNN, and BBC *Breakfast*.

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RESUME

1998 - Present **Milbrodt/Music & Sound Design**

Owner; Producer of Picture, Sound, and Music

Create video, music, and sound. Projects include promotional web videos, video news stories, band performance videos, musical themes and scores, and designing sound tracks. I work alone on smaller projects and bring in specialized team members for larger ones. As appropriate, my work includes writing, directing, shooting, compositing and visual effects, casting and directing of actors and voice artists, sound design, and composing music.

PROJECTS, PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS

Two-in-One

Actor/voice artist Bill Rogers wanted prospective clients to know he is a terrific character actor *and* a great voice artist; but clients seemed to nail him as one or the other. I suggested that he show off both talents in an introductory video and wrote "Mouthpiece for a Hot Dog". In it, Rogers plays a live character who argues with a talking hot dog -- for which he also provides the voice. At only 60-seconds, it is short enough and small enough to email.

Casting for Clarity

In an audio program or radio commercial, you can't see who is talking. In scenarios with multiple characters (especially), the actors' voices must contrast enough so listeners can *instantly* tell which character is speaking at any given moment. Inexperienced clients sometimes don't understand this. To help them, I created two web tutorials: "Choosing a Voice Actor" and "Auditioning Voice Actors". And when casting, I provide edited voice auditions that let them hear different actors reading the same parts of a scene in context.

A Win-Win

On NewJerseyNewsroom.com, a New Jersey oriented news web site, I produced a pilot project of two video news stories. They were career/business stories that delivered in-depth reports formatted as fast-paced mini-documentaries. The Publisher and I agreed on a length of roughly four minutes. Because they were shot documentary style, I had extra footage that we thought the audience would like. To deliver more story without exceeding our length, I suggested editing short video

“Extras” that would appear one-per-day on the days that followed our main story. It was a win-win: Interested audience members got more information and the Extras gave the site several fresh promotional opportunities.

1994 – 2009 **Car Music Project**

Composer-Bandleader

Created and led ensemble that played musical instruments made from car parts. Performed at Lincoln Center. Produced playable car part instruments for a Ford of Europe television commercial, then appeared on CBS Sunday Morning, CNN, the BBC, and in other media as Ford’s press spokesman for the launch of a live tour of those instruments. Guest speaker at Coventry University (UK), The College of New Jersey, SICA, and other organizations.

PROJECTS, PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS

Tune-Up

The Car Music Project is my own project. It’s both a project and a band. I wanted to turn my broken down car into music: to make music from its parts in a way that music *could be written* for them, that the *four instrument families of the traditional orchestra would be represented* (winds, brass, percussion, strings), and so they could deliver melody, harmony, and rhythm.

The route from automobile to performance raised hundreds of small problems that were solved with help from *at least* 50 people. I hired some and others offered advice just because the project interested them. The problems fell into 4 categories: Development, Documentation, Composing, and Performance.

Development: I hired an auto repair shop to dismantle the car and a metal sculptor to create playable musical instruments from its parts. I also hired professional musicians for testing and advice. An 18-month process resulted in about 65 instruments: 4 winds, 2 brass, 3 strings, and approximately 56 percussive items. One early problem related to strings. I wanted to use the car’s electrical wires as strings, but electrical wire is not engineered to stretch. It breaks long before it’s tight enough to produce useful tones. We resolved this by putting real musical instrument strings on the car part instruments. The project had suddenly grown more interesting because I now had two distinct instrument types: *pure bred* and *hybrid*. Pure bred instruments were all car parts. Hybrids were car parts *plus* musical instrument parts. And even more interesting:

None of them played perfectly in tune. So, early on, I knew that their idiosyncratic tunings needed to be part of the charm of every performance.

Documentation: To compose for the instruments I needed to know their capabilities, mainly related to tuning, fingering, and ergonomics. Some car part shapes are not optimal from a musical standpoint. This affects tuning and how fast they can be played. Others have centers of gravity that make holding them difficult. And because they're not off-the-shelf instruments, musicians who would play them would need information to acquaint themselves with them quickly. The result of this effort was to create a document for each that shows its fingering patterns, tuning specifications, pitch range, notes that do not play well, and how its part would be written within a musical score.

Composing: My four wind instruments have fingering holes -- like the holes in a recorder or wooden flute. Normally, a finger covers an entire hole. But to play some notes in tune on some of the wind instruments, the player must cover only *half* a hole. This kind of problem occurs in some way on almost all of the instruments. This means that, within any single performance, something was certain to be out of tune and, more likely, a bunch of things would be out of tune (covering half a hole isn't easy when your fingers are in motion). To accommodate unexpected bleeps, honks, clacks, grinds, and inevitable out-of-tune moments, I leave "room" for them, harmonically, when writing. And this has an effect on the performances, choice of performers, and overall sound of the band.

Performance: I was lucky to find professional musicians who are highly skilled, good at solving problems, terrific improvisers, and have an affinity for the unusual in music. Just as important, they enjoy and have fun with the Car Music Project instruments. Let's face it, if you can't find it in your heart to believe that "wrong notes have rights, too", you're not a fit for a project like this. For example, one of my rules was that if a musical phrase could not be played as written, it was up to the player to figure out another way to play it, or to modify it, so the result works in the overall. In the case of the bass, which is made from my car's gas tank, some notes when plucked create unavoidable grinding sounds like low-pitched metallic buzzes. To make this work the bassist would sometimes make all of the notes in a section buzz – and thereby bring a whole new musical sound to a performance.

In 2005, the *Car Music Project* was formed as an ongoing band that performed at galleries, schools, and festivals, including Lincoln Center. And because of the project, in 2007 I was hired to lead a team in the creation of playable car part instruments for an iconic European Ford Focus commercial.

1980 - 1998 **Music & Sound Design Studio**

President, Composer/Sound Designer

Provided professional sound recording, music production, sound design and video post-production services for commercial and corporate media, television, radio, and educational clients. Recorded with analog and digital technologies and created music and sound using analog and digital sound synthesis techniques. My studio became one of the world's first commercial studios to record directly to computer disk in 1987. Owned and worked on the Synclavier Digital Music System. Served as expert witness for Sony Tree Music. Won Emmy Award (NY) for Outstanding Original Music Composition.

PROJECTS, PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS

Sound All Around

I was the Sound Designer for "Flyin' West", a Crossroads Theatre Company play about former slaves in Nicodemus, Kansas after the Civil War. I suggested to the director that we use sound to create an immersive experience, to help make the audience feel as if it had entered into this small Great Plains community. We wanted them to hear the crickets, birds, and blowing grasses of rural Nicodemus from the moment they entered the theatre. He liked the idea. Now I had to figure out how to do it. Crossroads did not have surround sound technology, but it did have a 4-track reel-to-reel tape player. To create the immersive sound, I created 4 separate and different mono mixes. Each played from one of the machine's tracks; and the show's sound technician sent each track to a separate speaker in the room. As you walked to your seat, the sound changed (gently) from front to back and left to right. It worked. And when Flyin' West moved to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, my soundtracks traveled with it.

A Settled Matter

Sony Tree Music suspected that a short guitar riff from a Sony recording had been copied and used as a loop in another record company's recording. I was hired as an Expert Witness to analyze it, give my opinion, and provide "proof" if appropriate. To make my judgments, I copied both songs into my digital recording system, isolated the suspected riff from each, and lined them up to the same start point (accurate to 1/2400th of a second). Neither their lengths nor their pitches matched. However, when I retuned the suspect copy to the same starting pitch as the Sony version, all pitches and timing matched. And when looped, the Sony version stayed in perfect synchronization with the loops in the other song. As proof, I provided Sony Tree Music with a detailed explanation of my process and conclusions, and with printed audio

waveforms that showed the timing matches. I was told later that the issue never went to court because the other record company settled and paid Sony.

Additional Skills

Freelance writer-director: Wrote scripts for promotional and training videos for HBO, Prentice-Hall, Johnson & Johnson, Hertz, and other clients. Directed promotional and training videos and an independently produced pilot for a children's television show.

Coordinating Producer: Wrote proposals, assigned and scheduled crews, and performed miscellaneous production jobs for projects that included a Pocono 500 NASCAR Race, Universal Pictures press junkets, Philadelphia Roller Derby, and corporate and commercial productions.

Marketing-Communications Director: Built and led award winning department that produced print media and events, managed press relations, and developed and produced training materials. Responsible for planning, staff management, writing, photography, graphic design, media research, and supervising printers, banquet hall staff, entertainers, and other vendors.

Education

New York University

Tisch School of the Arts, BFA, Film Production

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1981** - Started producing music and sound effects part-time with ARP Odyssey analog synthesizer and 4-track TEAC reel-to-reel recorder.
- 1983** - Opened Music & Sound Design Studio in shared office space and offered sound design, music, and voice recording services.
- 1984** - Designed sound for RCA/Sarnoff Labs game technology demo that helped the client acquire development funding.
- 1984** - Created music for Olympics kiosks produced by AT&T's Bell Laboratories.
- 1985** - Moved studio to larger space and added audiocassette duplicating services.
- 1987** - Became one of the world's first commercial studios to adopt hard disk recording by purchasing a Synclavier and Direct-to-Disk recording system.
- 1988** - Created specially sequenced voice recordings on Synclavier/Direct-to-Disk for Bellcore's development of Automated Speech Recognition.
- 1988** - Created sound effects for exhibit in EPCOT Center's AT&T Pavilion.
- 1990** - Composed music and designed sound for *Don't Let Drugs Pull You Down*, an anti-drug PSA sponsored by the ITVA/MCI-I.
- 1991** - Composed musical scores for 4 entertainment shorts by Trompe l'Oeil Productions: *American Venus*, *You Can't Copyright a Circle*, *When Your Teeth Get Confused*, *By Way of November*.
- 1991** - First Award for Sound Design on *Don't Let Drugs Pull You Down* from NJ Communications, Advertising, and Marketing Association (NJCAMA).
- 1992** - Emmy Award for Outstanding Original Music Composition for *American Venus* from National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (NY NATAS).
- 1993** - Expert Witness for Sony Tree Music in music sampling case about the song, *Tequila*.
- 1993** - Produced 35 songs and scores for a Simon & Schuster elementary school Social Studies program.
- 1994** - Started the Car Music Project by having my 1982 Honda Accord dismantled.

1994 - Composed theme song for *Big Machines: Road Construction* in Sandbox Playtime Videos series.

1994 - Sound design for Crossroads Theatre Company production of *Flyin' West* that went on to the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC; sound design for Crossroads Theatre Company world premiere of *What Use Are Flowers?* at the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta; and sound design for *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl* touring multimedia production by the George Street Playhouse.

1994 to 1995 - Supervised design and production of the Car Music Project's musical instruments by a metal sculptor and team of consulting musicians.

1995 - Composed musical score for *The Movies Return*, a documentary by the NJ Motion Picture & Television Commission about the beginnings of moviemaking in New Jersey.

1995 - Arranged and produced a version of *St. James Infirmary* by Joe Primrose for the Official Anne Rice Web Site.

1995 to 1996 - Produced 500 recorded stories for a Simon & Schuster elementary school Reading program.

1996 - Featured in *Ripley's Believe It or Not* Sunday newspaper comic strip.

1997 - Produced the theme music for *A Visit with Anne Rice* documentary.

1998 - First performance of the Car Music Project in one-off concert at outdoor festival in Trenton, NJ.

1999 to 2002 - Wrote and produced *Nuggets in the Sky!*, a kids musical sound story.

2005 to 2009 - Started the Car Music Project as an ongoing band and performed at festivals, colleges, galleries, and schools.

2006 to 2008 - Guest speaker at Coventry University (UK), The College of New Jersey, SICA, and Princeton Regional Schools.

2007 - Cast, directed, and recorded the character voices for M&M's *Kart Racing* game produced by Destination Software for Wii and PlayStation platforms.

2007 - Car Music Project invited to perform on the outdoor plaza at Lincoln Center, New York City.

2007 - Led a team in the production of musical instruments made from Ford Focus car parts for *Ford Focus Orchestra*, a Ford of Europe TV commercial.

2008 - Press spokesman for launch of live UK tour by the *Ford Focus Orchestra* instruments with appearances on CNN, the BBC, CBS Sunday Morning, and in other media.

2008 to 2010 - Cast, directed, and recorded the character voices for M&M's *Beach Party* and *Adventure* games by Destination Software; for *Deal or No Deal* and *Minute to Win It* games by Zoo Games; and for *Heathcliff: The Fast and the Furriest* game by Storm City Games for the Wii and PlayStation platforms.

2009 to 2014 - Shot and edited live performance videos at Kenny's Castaways, the Red Lion, the Shrine, Silvana and the Living Room in New York City; at Resorts World Casino in Jamaica, Queens; and on a small soundstage at SoundWave Recording Studio in Union, NJ for jam sessions, Kaya, Code Blue, Red Sahara, Reverend Soul, and other acts.

2010 - Recorded Shawn Johnson for the *Shawn Johnson Gymnastics* game by Zoo Games for Wii and PlayStation platforms.

2011 to 2014 - Produced six video tutorials for people who are not hands-on video or film production professionals: *Clarity*, *Choosing a Voice Actor*, *Auditioning Voice Actors*, *Directing Voice Actors*, *Writing for Sound*, and *Voicing Games & Cartons*.

2013 - Produced two video news stories for NewJerseyNewsroom.com, a New Jersey oriented news web site: *Working Sideman* and *Raising the Bar*.

2014 - Cast, recorded, and edited character voices and narrations for game-based interactive training programs for Honda, Acura, and other companies.

2014 - Appeared in National Geographic's *Weird but True* book #6 in a feature about playing instruments made from car parts.

2014 - Wrote and produced *Mouthpiece for a Hot Dog*, a web commercial for actor and voice artist Bill Rogers.

2015 - Wrote and produced video web promos for *Crime & Reason*, an internet talk radio show on TalkZone.com.