



# The Mike Florio Interview

## Free-Thinking Musician and Reluctant Solo Artist

**Q:** Can you give an overview of your musical background?

**MF:** Basically I started off as a keyboard player, began writing my own songs after a while, and then caught the singing bug.

**Q:** So, do you consider yourself a 'keyboardist who sings', or a 'singer who plays keys'?

**MF:** Hmm... I would say singing is probably more fun; but I don't play or sing any better than a whole lot of other people, really. It's all part of just being a musician and making use of whatever you can.

**Q:** How would you label your music?

**MF:** It's progressive rock, I guess - at least in the traditional sense. I don't care for the term "Prog"; it has such a snobbish ring to it. "Progressive rock with classic rock sensibilities..."

**Q:** What would those "classic rock sensibilities" be?

**MF:** Emphasis on a catchy theme and backbeat, basic song structures...

**Q:** I take it you're not a fan of long prog epics, then?

**MF:** Oh, not true - just nothing since 1976! Seriously, in this genre there's always that trap of sounding like you're just trying too hard, if you know what I mean, when the whole ends up being less than the sum of the parts.

**Q:** How come you don't mention well-known artists that you sound like, or identify your influences anywhere? Wouldn't that bring more attention to your music, or attract more curiosity?

**MF:** Yeah, I know all the how-to-market-your-music gurus advise that, but I've always been uncomfortable with it. It seems disingenuous. It also seems to me an admission of being insignificant. I prefer to describe what I do in terms of artistic intentions rather than artistic influences. Besides, reviewers do enough speculating about who people's influences must be.

**Q:** What's the deal with your attitude toward CD reviewers?

**MF:** Well, just as technology has enabled anyone to release a CD, it's also enabled anyone to review it. Musicians no longer need record companies; but critics no longer need publishers! The amateur reviews tend to be real geeky or cornball sometimes.

**Q:** Welcome to the underground prog scene...

**MF:** Exactly! The level of professionalism is always suspect across the board - starting with the music itself of course. But there is no corporate filtering mechanism, no real viable industry.

**Q:** Is that a good thing?

**MF:** I think if you just want to put out records, yes; but if you want people to notice, then no! Let's face it, most of us are doomed to be lost in the sea of heads.

**Q:** How do you feel about illegal downloading and file sharing?

**MF:** The way I see it, sharing is something you do with people you actually know. Who hasn't burned a CD - or dubbed a cassette like we did back in the dark ages - for a friend? But the internet makes it easy to give away someone's music to unlimited people you don't even know. That to me is not in the spirit of sharing at all.

**Q:** Any plans for playing live shows?

**MF:** Honestly, getting a band up and running is something I just don't have the patience for anymore. But I have some ideas about what might work in a solo context, so the answer is 'maybe'.

**Q:** I've read where you've mentioned the frustration you've had with bands...

**MF:** Yeah, you know, I never wanted to "go solo", or put out music under my own name. I always expected to be successful as a part of a group; part of a team. That's what I always loved about playing music. But after a lot of years it seemed the only way I was going to move forward was total self-reliance; not making my aspirations dependent on anybody else, or any situation I couldn't control.

**Q:** What are some of the challenges of being a solo artist?

**MF:** It's lonely as hell, for one. I often feel as if I'm playing to the four walls. I don't know... Maybe if I were doing shows or selling more CDs I wouldn't feel that way. I think all artists need that affirmation to feel good about what they're doing. We all thrive on positive response to our work. That's why, I guess, I loved playing in bands. You get that affirmation right from the other guys in the room who appreciate your contribution. Like I said, I never wanted to be doing this by myself!



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