

BOB MOOG'S LEGACY STILL FELT ON UNCA'S CAMPUS

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Though internationally known as an inventor of musical instruments and a pioneer of sound, local friends and family said Robert Moog worked, taught and participated in the Asheville community for more than 20 years.

"He was and remains the first name in synthesis," said area musician Dan Lewis.

Moog invented the Moog synthesizer in the 1960s and became internationally recognized when groups such as Yes, the Beatles and Emerson, Lake and Palmer began utilizing his inventions in the studio and on stage.

The Moogfest music festival, scheduled for the end of October, will celebrate Moog's contributions to music.

The Moog Music factory, located on Riverside Drive, still produces Moog's famous synthesizers, guitars, effects pedals and Theremins.

Moog moved to Asheville in 1978 to build a house and workshop in nearby Leicester.

The area's natural beauty and the need for a creative environment initially attracted Moog, according to his daughter, Michelle Moog-Koussa.

"He moved down here after he left the first Moog Music up in Buffalo," Moog-Koussa said. "He left in 1978, and he wanted to get away from the kind of corporate environment that he was in, and he wanted to be in a more creative environment."

Moog began what would become a lifelong affiliation with UNC Asheville soon after his arrival in the area, according to Wayne Kirby, professor and chair of the music department.

"He taught for a few years, and he guest lectured almost until he died," Kirby said.

Moog taught briefly in both the music and physics departments during the 1990s, presenting courses revolving around his electronic music background.

After Moog's death in 2005, Kir-

by said he wanted to find a way for UNCA to commemorate his friend's legacy.

With support from the faculty and administration, Kirby renovated a space in Lipinsky Hall and created the Bob Moog Electronic Music Studio in 2009.

Kirby said the space contains exclusively Moog Music equipment.

"It's basically a classroom, a mini recital hall and a laboratory where students learn how to use the equipment and compose," Kirby said.

While organizing musical acts for the 1980 Bele Chere street festival, Lewis, who owns and operates the Acoustic Audio recording studio in Hendersonville, heard about Moog's move to the area and decided to contact him and ask him if he would like to make a festival appearance.

"I thought, 'If nothing else, I'll get to hear his voice,'" Lewis said.

Moog surprised Lewis and suggested he play synthesizer with a group at the event.

Lewis had planned to perform with friend and fellow musician Mike Abbott at the festival and suggested the three form a trio.

"I was thrilled with the possibility, but also sort of half-terrified," Lewis said.

Abbott and Lewis began arranging new music for the event and meticulously scored Moog's parts.

The three practiced at Moog's workshop in Leicester and began to piece together the music.

"He was the most natural, unassuming, pleasant and jovial guy to work with," Lewis said.

The trio performed at Bele Chere and at a follow-up November concert in the former location of the Asheville Art Museum, which was then part of the Asheville Civic Center complex.

Abbott recorded their practices and arranged for the recording of both performances.

To Lewis' knowledge, these recordings remain the only live record of a Moog musical performance.

"Thanks to Mike's forethought, we have all that tape, and I've been preserving it for all these years," Lewis said.

On Oct. 10, Lewis will release a CD documenting the Art Museum performance along with several rehearsal sessions, with all proceeds benefiting the Bob Moog Foundation.

A release-day launch party and performance from Lewis and other area musicians will occur at the Lexington Avenue Brewery.

Moog-Koussa, executive director of the Bob Moog Foundation, said his family, friends and colleagues started the organization in order to preserve Moog's legacy.

"The mission of the foundation is to educate and inspire people through electronic music, but specifically through the intersection of music, science and innovation," Moog-Koussa said.

The foundation, which formally launched in 2006, has several ongoing projects, according to Moog-Koussa.

One project, the Mooglab, brings an education outreach program to elementary schools, where students learn using Moog instruments.

"What it also is, is a very engaging way for children to learn about basic physics through music," Moog-Koussa said.

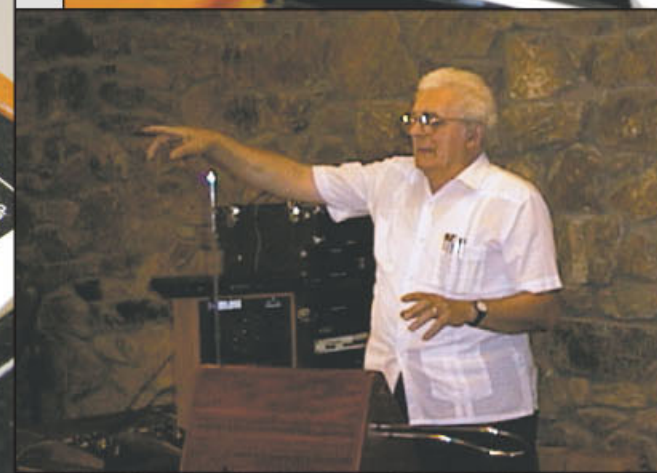
Other projects include the restoration and preservation of Moog's extensive archive of music, articles and schematics, and a proposed \$3 million museum and performance space called the Moogseum.

At Moogfest, the foundation plans to bring together musicians and sound designers from all eras of electronic music to hold discussions on history, technology and education.

"We're bringing in people from the seminal period of synthesis right up to very young, hip sound designers," Moog-Koussa said.

Moog-Koussa said as Moog's projects and companies evolved in the Asheville area, so too did a flourishing music and arts scene.

"The kind of thing that attracted Bob here also attracted a lot of other people," Moog-Koussa said. "Somehow, there is a synergy of spirit between the kind of people who are attracted to this area."



Photos courtesy UNCA physics department & Megan Dombroski/photography editor
Bob Moog gives a presentation for an ARTS 310 in 2002. Moog left such a lasting impact on UNCA's campus that a room in Lipinsky houses instruments he created and is named after him. Bottom right, Moog gives a presentation at a Theremin workshop in 1998.