

The Digital Age or The End of the World as We Know It

By Roger Paradiso

I went into a CVS last week. There was no one at any of the registers. I felt like I was in *The Twilight Zone*. I called out. A voice told me to use the self-check. I stared at that worthless piece of AI and dread entered into my soul. Was I going to contribute to the loss of a worker's job? I called out again. She said, "I'm the only clerk in the store. Use the self-check. It's easy."

That's all I needed to hear. It was easy. Oh yeah, I'll show you how easy it can be. You see, technology and me aren't a good mix.

I approached the machine with a rush, hoping to scare it to hell and back. That didn't work. I read the instructions and heard that AI voice that sounded like a soulless avatar from some science fiction movie. I pushed all sorts of digital buttons and scanned the product every which way but up. The damn thing wasn't working.

I was starting to land some good punches to this AI robot. Good thing there were no other people in the store, and especially not a police officer. I gave it a final kick in the nuts and bolts and was contemplating the existential concept of stealing the product, since the AI didn't work, when I heard a human voice. "Can I help you?" I looked around and thought I saw a hot model in red boots, but as my eyes refocused, I saw an old grandma about my age. "Yes, you can," I said, as I moved to her register. "Couldn't figure out the self-check?" she asked. "Oh no," I said. "I figured it out.



IS IT TIME TO REBEL from the Evil Empire? Photo by Roger Paradiso.

I'm saving your job." She smiled and took the product, pointed to the credit card machine, and before you could say, "Have a good day," I was out of there.

That's what I like. A human at the other end of a transaction. It sort of makes me feel we're going to be all right in the future. Let the revolution begin or hunger games

begin. Whatever. I got out of the store before the cops came and checked on the busted self-check AI robot. Just another day in the Wild West digital age.

Village Trip Festival

By Roger Paradiso

It was the most humid day of the summer. It was September 18th and still late summer.

The Village Trip Festival had taken over 8th Street in the heart of Greenwich Village. David Amram was playing there, just blocks from many of the clubs and theaters, he had played many years ago when the Village was the epicenter of arts and culture in the 1960s.

The festival had set up some turf on 8th Street and there were members of the audience sitting there enjoying the concert. Standing around the end of MacDougal and 8th Street were about two hundred fans who braved the weather for this afternoon delight.

I called David the next night. He said he was dehydrating during the show and some nice people came up with water and ice for him. The band took a brief break and completed the four-hour set. I asked David why he played some of the songs in his set.

"I got word that Doris Diether had passed away a few days ago and I wanted

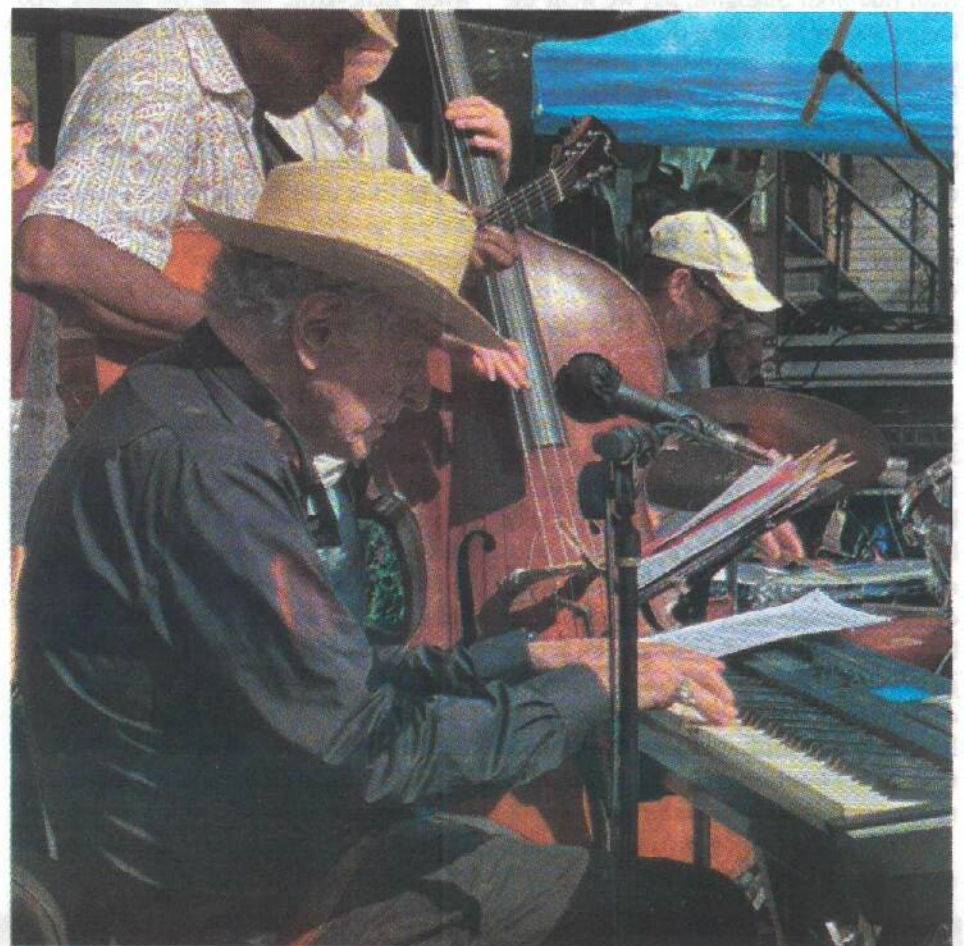
to memorialize her with *Amazing Grace*. I went up to Renee Manning and asked her if she would sing the song. And the rest of the band jumped right in. It all came together ya dig, The Village always stressed collaboration and community and it all worked.

"It was so nice to play a piece by Sonny Rollins called *Saint Thomas*. Jerome Harrison had played guitar with Sonny." Rollins played numerous clubs in the Village and is recognized as one of America's great composers and jazz tenor saxophonists.

"There was a chance to do my own *Waltz from the Fall* which I composed for Arthur Miller's play called *After the Fall*. In the first three years of Lincoln Center Repertory theater we were in residence at a Theater just around the corner here on West Fourth. The reason we were in the Village was because the Lincoln Center complex was still being finished."

"*After the Fall*" opened at the ANTA Washington Square Theatre in 1964.

I felt that that day's concert here at the Village Trip reminded me of those days in the Village where people used to come together and create some music.



DAVID AMRAM AT THE KEYBOARDS and his band playing at the Village Trip Festival on West 8th Street. Photo by Roger Paradiso.