



Calling All Workers!

I have written many times about my habit of listening to music while I work on my printmaking. I know some people need a quiet environment to be able to get any work done, but I have never found this to be the case. I suppose it is because my work is basically physical rather than mental, and although my printmaking certainly requires good concentration, it doesn't require much deep thought.

These days though, now that there are other people in this workshop with me, I am no longer completely at liberty to play loud music, or even to play music at all. Because my co-workers are 'employees', they don't have much say in these decisions, and I am technically free to ignore their wishes. I obviously do not want to behave in such a way though, and as I want this place to be a 'happy shop', of course we have discussed this.

Their response - to date - has been along the lines of 'Oh, we don't mind; please play music as you wish.' But I have been in Japan long enough to understand this is not necessarily - nor likely - their true feelings. The cultural rules in such matters are pretty clear - don't cross the boss!

So these days, out of consideration for their (unknown) wishes, I am playing much less music than before. And when I do play something, it is certainly not along the lines of the Shostakovich 5th with the volume cranked up to 10! I have been selecting more peaceful music, perhaps light piano jazz or other similar genres.

This though, brings a problem all its own. If I play music of a generally non-challenging - not to say soporific - nature, our mood follows this, and it becomes difficult to maintain a vigorous work attitude. If you want good productivity from your workers, you don't play new age music!

So I had an idea. I picked up a set of discs of a type of music that I thought would fulfill *both* requirements - provide us with a pleasant mood in the workshop, and yet not put us all to sleep. The music? (My parents are going to laugh out loud when they read this ...) The CD set is entitled 'British Light Music Classics', and the very first track is entitled 'Calling All Workers.' This is music that was created in the early days of the Second World War at the request of the British government and the BBC. The country had mobilized to fight the war, and the idea was to broadcast such music in factories, to keep everybody's spirits up, and yes ... to keep them working at top efficiency!

When I played this for the first time the other day, the reaction in our little workshop was immediate. In the space of just seconds, the mood had indeed changed: all thoughts of drowsiness or lethargy were banished, everybody perked up, and the barens moved vigorously.

But it didn't last long. Tsushima-san looked over at me with an obvious question in her eyes, "Are you serious?"

Well, no I wasn't. Not really. I explained to them something of the background to this kind of music, and I then switched the player to a shuffle mode, where the bright up tempo pieces were interspersed with other light music of a more general nature. This left a more balanced mood, and I think these discs will go into our playlist for listening now and again.

On second thought though, maybe I should just drop this whole idea. A minute later, along came another famous classic of the genre: 'By the Sleepy Lagoon'.

They didn't mind *that* one at all ...

Zzzzz ... zzzzz ...

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