

## Featured Artist

# RIGO

**Syncopation Literary Journal**

**Volume 3, Issue 1: Winter/Spring 2024**

Art is, for me, an effort to express something of the feelings we have during the window of time we exist. As artists, we interpret, communicate, and conjure meaning through aesthetic forms. Sometimes we search for experiences to transform into art, and sometimes an image or a turn of phrase gets lodged into our psyche, stirring creative impulses. For the multi-media artist, it isn't always clear which medium will best translate particular experiences into an aesthetic form.

For instance, with my story "The Nautilus Guitars," I started with a feeling—the desire some people have to achieve a radical innovation in their field—to not just contribute to existing knowledge, but to open up new avenues for exploration. I zeroed in on luthiery because I'd wanted for a long time to do a project about instrument building. So many musicians, like me, have a special relationship to their instrument(s) and an instrument's construction influences how our music sounds. Many of us, like Segovia, spend years auditioning instruments to get the sound we're after, and seek out innovative instrument makers/artists.

As I was mulling over how to approach the project, I had a dream where I saw the keys of a piano mapped onto the pattern of a nautilus shell. In the morning, as I journaled about the dream, I reflected on something from my anthropological background. Within a set of creative limits, like an alphabet or a musical scale, an infinite number of combinations and arrangements is possible. The project started with a set of quick sketches in my sketchbook to link together some of the feelings, ideas, and images floating in my head. I sketched what I'd seen in the dream, seeking out connections, zeroing in on the Fibonacci



Black Door '74

sequence as a guitar bracing pattern, and as a metaphor. Given how much music is composed on guitars, I decided the guitar would be a great symbol for the infinite creativity possible within limits.



Rigo

I'm always on the lookout for artistic collaborations, and my Black Door '74 bandmates Rodmon King and Greg Frost-Arnold are two of the artists who have helped me grow the most. As I was drafting "The Nautilus Guitars," I composed a classical guitar piece and wanted to put lyrics to it. After a few failed attempts, I brought the song to my bandmates, and we finished

a draft of it together during a three-day retreat. Here you can watch a video of us collaborating, from the moment I introduced the song to them through our very first performance of “Whisper Becomes a Roar”:

[https://youtu.be/IUwAw5z4\\_1g](https://youtu.be/IUwAw5z4_1g)

And here’s a video where you can hear the final recording:

<https://youtu.be/aw09wVihhdM>

“Whisper Becomes a Roar” is the title track to our new album. We’re very excited to release our album to coincide with this feature. You can hear the whole album here:

<https://blackdoor74.bandcamp.com/album/whisper-becomes-a-roar>

Whether it’s a song, a painting, a piece of writing, or something else, I feel that my art fails if it doesn’t create some kind of powerful emotional experience. Art media are avenues to reflect and shape experience, and to depict and foster cross-cultural connections and understanding. But most of all, my hope with each artwork I create is that it might imbue my life and the lives of others with meaning.

~Rigo

#



Rigo’s sketches as described in this article



“Conjurer of Meaning #77,” Rigo (Ritchie Valens and his guitar)

*Rigo lives in Amherst, Massachusetts with his family. His creative writing has appeared in such venues as Syncopation Literary Journal, THEMA, and A Thin Slice of Anxiety.*

*A multi-instrumentalist and singer-songwriter, Rigo is querying a number of novel-length works, is a member of the rock band Black Door '74 (<https://blackdoor74band.com/>), and also performs music solo ([www.rigoartist.com](http://www.rigoartist.com)). When he’s not working, he enjoys teaching his kids the value of mischief and creativity, which are often the same thing.*

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100011288868620>

Twitter: [@RigoArtist](https://twitter.com/RigoArtist)