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‘LOU HARRISON: A WORLD OF MUSIC’

Long-awaited documentary on acclaimed composer and artist finally reaches an audience

{ **MONDAY** 7 p.m. Del Mar Theatre, 1124 Pacific Ave., Santa Cruz.
cabrillomusic.org. }

By **WALLACE BAINE**
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Eva Soltes lives with the ghost of Lou Harrison.

Well, she actually lives across the street.

Still, you can't blame her if she took a moment to find that ghost and tell him the news that "Lou, it's finally done."

Soltes is a filmmaker who has been cataloging the life of the internationally celebrated composer for decades. And, finally, nine years after the great's man death at the age of 85, Soltes has finished her documentary "Lou Harrison: A World of Music."

Soltes makes her home outside the Southern California desert town of Joshua Tree, just across the street from a one-of-a-kind straw bale house designed by Harrison and finished just a year before his death in 2003. She will be on hand for a post-screening Q&A session after a screening of the new film Monday at the Del Mar. The film is being presented as part of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, the 50-year-old festival of which Harrison was a founder.

She said that her oldest footage in the film dates back to around 1984. "My earliest work in the film would now be considered archival footage."

Nevertheless, it is a tall task in

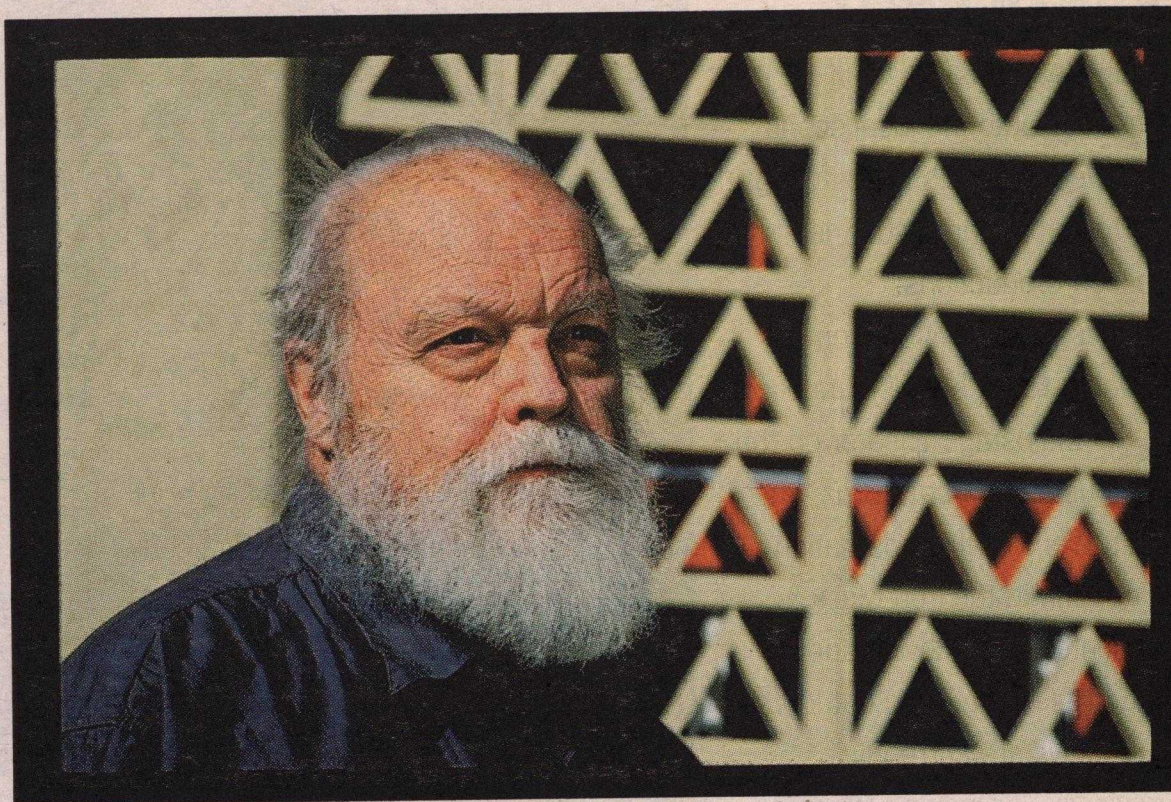
attempting to make the definitive film about a man who for most of his life refused to be defined. Harrison, who lived much of his life in Aptos with his long-time partner Bill Colvig, was a towering figure in 20th century avant-garde music, a student of fellow musical visionary Henry Cowell and a leading artist in incorporating the sounds of gamelan into Western music. Yet for all his musical bonafides, Harrison was also a poet, painter, bon vivant, gay icon and a mentor and inspiration for many artists both locally and around the world.

"That was the hardest part," said Soltes. "It was a huge challenge to do him justice as an artist and as a man. It's a huge life."

The film emerged from more than 300 hours of performances, rehearsals and interviews with Harrison, Colvig and Harrison's contemporaries and admirers, including such luminaries as dance icon Merce Cunningham and conductor Michael Tilson Thomas.

Harrison's music is widely recognized throughout the world by musicians and music scholars. But the kind of mainstream notice given to John Cage, a Harrison contemporary, mostly eluded Harrison.

Soltes said that her goal was both to showcase Harrison's musical genius — "Lou was such a superb craftsman as a composer," she said — and to illu-



minate Harrison's considerable charisma as a man. Her film attempts to capture Harrison as avuncular and warm to his many friends and eternally adventurous when it came to his artistic pursuits.

Today, Soltes acts as a kind of caretaker for the Harrison House in Joshua Tree; she has, in fact, made another film, this one just about the

house. The Harrison House, she said, is now used as a kind of venue for distinctive concerts and musical events.

"He was just so inspirational to me," she said of Harrison's influence in her own life. Since finishing the film, she has shown it in several festivals and special events, including at the Castro Theatre in San Fran-

cisco last March, where Harrison is seen as an important forerunner in the advance of gay rights.

"The people who knew Lou really loved him. And he really had a gift for inspiring people. I can't tell you how many people have approached me after seeing the film to say, 'I wish I could have known him.'"