

About Primitive Modern for Horn and Recorded CD

by James Beckel

Primitive Modern was written in 2002 on a commission from Kent Leslie. It also was partially funded by grants from the Indiana Arts Commission and the International Horn Society. While man's intellect has grown by leaps and bounds over the centuries, one must wonder if our emotions have evolved as well since the times of our caveman ancestors. *Primitive Modern* in part addresses this issue. The work opens quietly with sounds that conjure up the emotions of apprehension and fear, also reinforced by the first entrance of the horn. As the work progresses, we go from the slow opening to a faster, primitive, drum-like dance. The horn call that accompanies this music could easily be thought of as a war cry of our primitive ancestors.

While synthetic sounds used in the first part of the composition make use of unfamiliar sounds – possibly the cries of primeval beasts – in the middle of the work the listener will notice synthetic sounds of modern day instruments. The harmonic language and use of these instruments imitate a more sophisticated musical structure, but eventually grows to a frenzied state that takes us to a horn cadenza. The remorseful nature of this cadenza suggests the sadness that man has not been able to rise above hatred, anger, and jealousy. The piece concludes with the return of the opening primitive dance, perhaps saying that we haven't evolved that far from our caveman ancestors.

Primitive Modern interfaces the acoustic horn with taped synthetic sounds that address the issue of technology versus expression and emotion. Enjoy your journey into the primitive and the modern. The composer has dedicated this piece to the victims of the September 11, 2001 tragedy.