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By Danny Barnes

Music is Good: An interview with Bill Frisell (excerpt)

DB: Can I read you something and see what you think of it? I found this at the Dali Museum. It's called "the Divine Proportion" by H.E. Huntley. And it's basically about beauty and mathematics, that's the subtitle of the book. And in the preface he talks about "discouraging hazards of a career in mathematics." There are four things. And I was wondering if you felt like commenting on these.

1. The burden of hard mental concentration is sine quo non. You may have to find that you live with a problem day and night for weeks, giving all that you have of mental resources in order to solve it. No inspiration without perspiration.
2. Your best efforts may be fruitless, despite extravagant expenditure of time and skill, the result may be nil. Disappointment, frustration and near despair are common occurrences of serious mathematicians.
3. You may be lonely. Scarcely anyone will appreciate your work because few will be capable of understanding it.
4. The results you do obtain will always appear to be disproportionately meager in comparison with the effort you expended to produce them. The mountains labored and brought forth the mouse.

He wraps it up like this, "the one true path to satisfaction in a mathematics career is to cultivate assiduously the aesthetic appreciation of the discipline. That pleasure will not fade."

BF: Everything totally applies to music! Everything you said there sounds like what's happening. I don't know what to say!

DB: I read that and thought I wonder what Bill would think of that?

BF: Can I see [the writing]? Sometimes when I'm sitting there, working on a thing, that's the best, when you're just in midst of figuring it out. You just get lost in that world. And you're not there but you're in it. You never get to where this dream is of what we're doing, that's not it. It's the getting there part, I guess.

DB: I thought that was interesting. Cause I thought it sort of talked about some of the things you've already brought up. But then at the end it wraps it up around an appreciation of music itself, or whatever you're studying. If you focus on that, everything works out.

BF: You can't go wrong.

You can read the full interview at: http://www.billfrisell.com/artists/Frisell/press_link.html