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January 2021
Vol. 3, Issue 1

DJ WIZ HOFFA

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MARTY KEARY

It's darkest before the light, and Marty Keary's book is filled with candles and matches.

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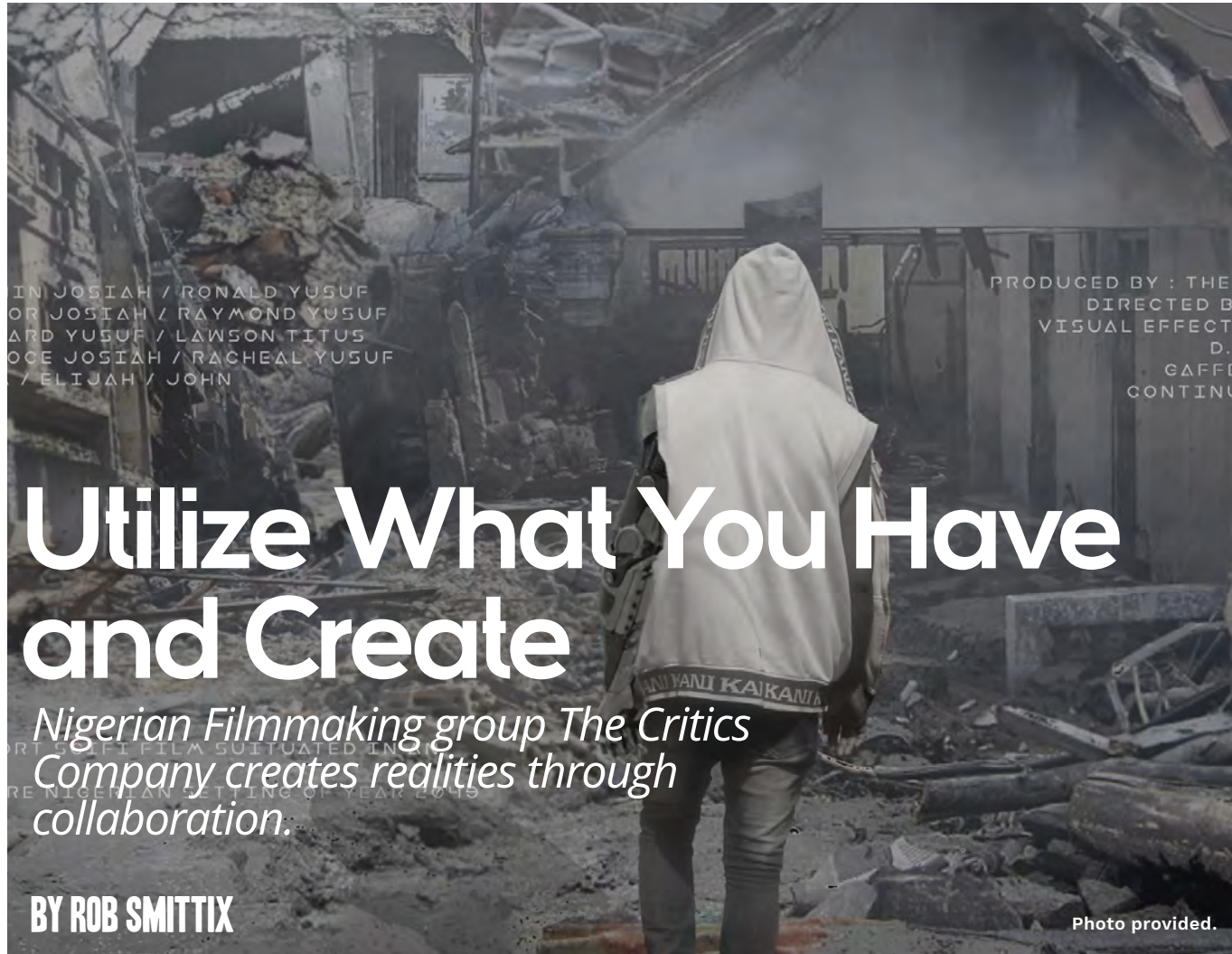
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The Critics Company is a young group of Nigerian filmmakers that have impressed the likes of Hollywood producers and directors. When the group got started they had very little to work with but they utilized what they did have and the end results were some phenomenal sci-fi short films. I (Rob Smittix) have been a fan for quite some time and today I introduce my new friends to all of you.

RRX: Critics Company if you could in your own words explain who you are and what you do.

Raymond Yusuff: I'm a VSX artist and cinematographer. I am given shots to work on and add visual magic to them. Visual magic is something as making somebody fly in the sky when

the person is actually standing on a bare floor or removing a cup from a scene. That's a line from my TEDx speech early 2020 (laughs). As a cinematographer my job is to bring out quality looking images for our short films.

Lawson Titus: I'm the sound guy and what I do is make sure we have quality sound on set while shooting. I'm also a photo editor.

Ronald Yusuff: I am the props man and second camera assistant for the Critics. As a props man my job is to create extra props. Props you can't actually get, it's too expensive for us to order or it's gonna take time for us to get, so I have to create them. As a second camera assistant my job is to get extra camera angles on set. Especially

for scenes that we have to shoot in one take.

Richard Yusuff: What I do on sets is actually make sure we shoot according to the scripts we're writing.

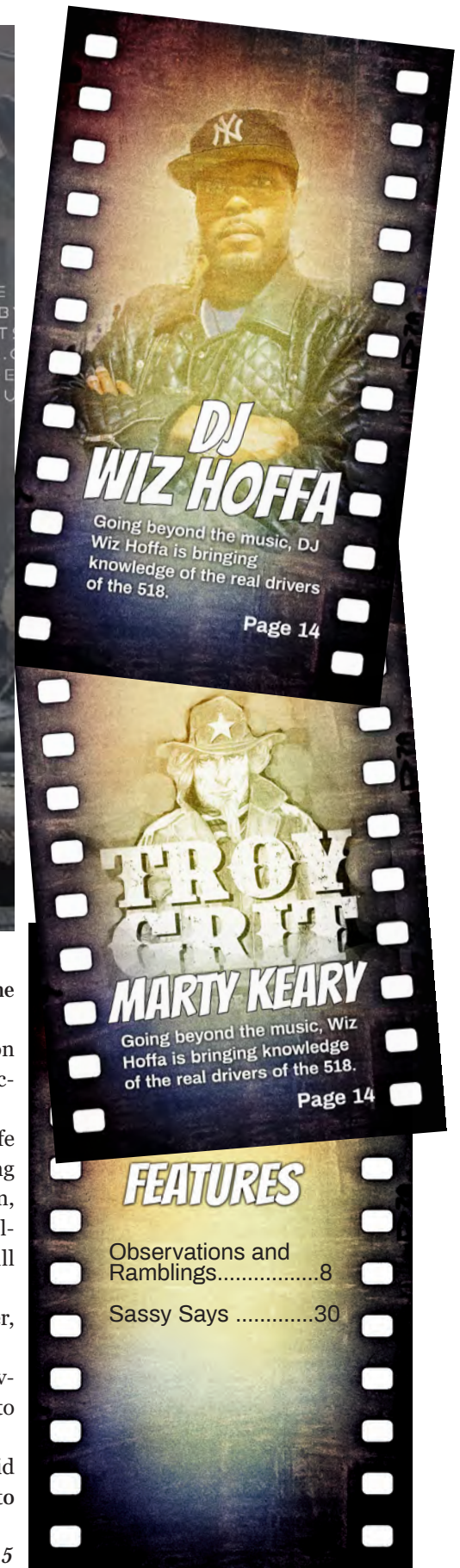
Victor Josiah: My job is to bring life to a scene to provide lighting according to the cinematographer's instruction, bringing color to the shots without color grid. And lastly I'm in charge of all lights and behind the scenes.

Godwin Josiah: I'm a film maker, a writer and director.

Ridwan Adeniyi: I manage everything around here, from people to resources and projects.

RRX: How did this begin? How did this get started from the ground up to

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The Critics Company. Photo provided.

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where you are now?

Richard: The Critics Company started back in 2012. We realized we watched the same movies at the same time and then we actually met to talk about them. We watched Nigerian films and we saw that they were bad so we criticized them. We took it upon ourselves, we could actually change this and make new films. That was where the film making dream began.

RRX: So one of the things I noticed that I thought was rather cool is the transparency that you show as far as how you make your videos. So on your YouTube channel there are all sorts of different tutorials, really just capturing the moments on how you did like a green screen or how you do special effects, certain little tricks that help enhance the videos. I appreciate that. What was it that made you decide to show behind the curtain a little bit and showing them how you do what you do?

Raymond: We had this meeting amongst ourselves where we had to decide if this move was right for us. Why are we revealing our secrets and sharing everything to the world? But the truth is we learnt these things that we know how to do from people who shared insights on their YouTube channel. If these people were stingy with their knowledge we might not have learnt anything and we might not have made films and probably The Critics might not have existed. It could end there without any guidance to follow. So we took it upon ourselves since we did not have a lot of content creators in Nigeria. We're like okay, maybe we can actually do this for the young people around us and could probably inspire somebody somewhere.

RRX: You caught the attention of JJ Abrams. Then you received a big box full of something, I'm sure it helped you out. Explain to us that experience and how it made you feel to catch the

attention of some of Hollywood's elites.

Godwin: It's something we all didn't see coming but it did happen. We had people we've always looked up to send us messages telling us how good our stuff was. The feelings were all over the place because... I don't know, personally it was too much to take in at that time. The feeling was sweet as honey. I don't think quite a lot of people get to experience that particular feeling throughout their lifetime. People you look up to telling you, you are good, it's actually really rare. JJ Abrams is a very big supporter of ours until this very day. (JJ) went further and actually sent us packages down here to Nigeria. Packages included cinema cameras and better filming equipment. We also had a one-on-one conversation with JJ which if you told us last year we would not had ever believed that would happen. It's surreal, it was unbelievable. We hope to use the very best knowledge and inspire others like they have inspired us to create.

RRX: Critics Company is a gigantic example of utilize what you have and make something from it. I'm under the impression that you will be millionaires someday and given the fact that you're going to have some cash to spend. How do you plan on giving back to your community in Nigeria?

Ronald: So giving back to society is something that we've actually had discussions about because growing up where we grew up we didn't actually have access to a lot of camera equipment, computers and film making gear. We are planning on creating a platform or a place where young people can come together and see these things first hand and have access directly and lend out to use this equipment. We created an online group and brought a lot of young people together to give them tips on how these things work and just to share ideas.



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Observations and Ramblings From a Cranky Old Guy

BY JEFF SPAULDING

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

While there's no guarantee 2021 will be better than 2020, we all pray it CAN'T be any worse.

At minimum we all at least know SOMEONE who tested positive for COVID, and unfortunately many experienced the pain and suffering of a friend or loved one who passed due to (at least in part) complications of the illness.

As I write this (December 13th), I learned of a giant in the entertainment field to pass away.

In a moment, I will share a list of others in the "entertainment" field to also leave us.

One, it's an incomplete list, and two, it does NOT make these people any more important or "special" than Joe or Jane Lunch Bucket.

For example, during the AIDS epidemic, it was treated as a Black Death Plague, it only dealt with homosexuals. Even the President of the United States ignored it, perhaps thinking it would just blow away.

Sorry, wrong president.

Then one celebrity who got AIDS made it acceptable, made it a worthy fight for the good of America, if not the world.

Rock Hudson.

The He Man's He Man...if ROCK could get it, we're all doomed.

(Of course, at the time most people still didn't accept Rock was gay, didn't matter, it got President Reagan to FINALLY address it).

Now, the COVID Celebrity Death List, in no particular order.

David Prowse - the "body" of Darth

Vader

Tommy DeVito - founding member of the Four Seasons

Tom Seaver - Amazin' Met

Trini Lopez - Latin singer and actor

Roy Horn - as in "Siegfried and ---"

John Prine - if you don't know who he is you shouldn't be reading this

Adam Schlesinger - co founder of Fountains of Wayne

Joe Diffie - Country...strike that... Hillbilly Singer

Ellis Marsalis Jr - patriarch of a jazz dynasty

Again, just a small handful, but tragic all the same

Now, as mentioned above, the latest giant to fall from COVID.

"Country" Charley Pride, at age 86.

Pride one of my all-time favorite country performers.

Notice I didn't say "Black" country performers.

He didn't get into the business to be a "Black" country performer.

He got into the business to be just a country performer.

It sure wasn't easy.

In his early days, according to legend, his record company kept his picture off the releases they sent to the radio stations.

God knows, (their words, not mine) those stations would never play music by Negroes...

(History or not, I will not put the REAL word they used).

Charley Pride became a star because of his talent, not/never because of his skin color.

As it should be.

Tell you a true story that happened in my early days of professional radio.

I'm in Ashland, Ohio, about a half hour before my graveyard shift.

I am live in the studio with the guy I will relieve, and he's about to introduce the new Charley Pride song.

Remember how he is known as "Country Charley Pride?"

This douche, accidentally or not, calls him "colored Charley Pride" live on the air.

I'm in shock and scream at him, asking why he did that, he calmly points to the quiet phones and says:

"Well the phones aren't ringing, either they aren't listening or they don't care."

This was 1978.

Point of reference, no one ever did.

To be fair, during that same time, I played a song by Freddie Fender (known for "Before the Last Teardrop Falls"), and referred to him on the air (in a play-on the Lee Majors TV Hit) as the "Six Million Dollar Mexican," and

not one call or complaint.

Right or wrong it was just the way it was.

Here's something you may not know about Charley Pride, since 1968, he was being treated for manic depression (they call it "bi-polar" now).

To someone going through that, especially a friend or family member to someone going through that, it's more than amazing Pride's career was as gigantic as it was.

Speaking of career, the man had TWENTY-NINE chart singles to hit NUMBER-ONE, as well as NINE albums to hit NUMBER-ONE as well.

Finally, and this is the ONLY time to mention the "Black" thing when it comes to Country Charley Pride, if not for him, there's no Kane Brown, there's no Cowboy Troy, there's no Darius Ricker, among others.

On that note, screw 2020, pray for 2021.

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Josh Casano. Photo provided.

I had a music program in every school I went to. But I was only in one. Not because I wasn't interested, but because there was never any specific urging for people to take music. Math, science, social studies, gym? No getting around those. But our schools didn't value music so much. Did I mention I hated school?

Josh Casano teaches music and chorus at Schenectady Public Schools. And I am happy to know that in Schenectady, music education is in good hands.

I sit down with Josh and we talk about school shopping at swap meets.

RRX: Music, like all creative pursuits, is very "left-brain/right-brain." There's creativity, but also language and math involved. And teaching is tough no matter the subject. What's your approach to teaching music to schoolkids?

JC: I'm honest. I get to teach topics

I really enjoy and my emotions are genuine. Also, I find that there has to be a way to relate the content to either current music or to events and experience. I teach high school. I think I have an easier time making lessons relevant to my students and their personal experiences and connections. The majority of my research has been based on Culturally Responsive practices in an urban classroom, having the opportunity to be teaching Music in Our Lives encompasses the history of Western music, history of hip hop, rock and roll, music production, world music and more. I am lucky to teach in such a diverse population that, these topics remain relevant and engaging.

RRX: Schools spend a lot on

BY LIAM SWEENEY

sports. The football team gets the stadium, whereas the marching band might just have to buy their own instruments. Why do you think the priorities are like this? And how do we convince schools to spend more on music and the arts?

JC: I think that is a regional question. Schools like Schenectady have been very supportive of the arts. Niskayuna, Albany, Shenendehoa, North Colonie, etc...all have great fine arts programs and the communities continue to support them. We have all been hit hard by recent events and budget cuts but the importance of your Fine Arts programs are not lost in this area. Arts are still important and are given the consideration just as much as sports. This is especially true given the growing music and art scene in the Capital Region and Hudson Valley.

RRX: Teaching is really a balance of the bell curve. Some kids will struggle with chapter one, while the kid next to them finishes the whole book a few days after getting it. How do you keep music interesting for the adept, which keeping it approachable for the struggling?

JC: It is always great when I have students who grasp concepts faster;

Musician and educator Josh Casano teaches from the front of the gig.

that are not shy. They are the ones that are able to help their classmates when the uncertain students need assistance. I try and rely on the system of having students help each other. This allows me to really get some one-on-one time with the students that need a little more. Often times, I will have written directions posted as I give them orally to ensure understanding of what is being asked. We need to find so many ways to make sure our students can understand what we are teaching and what we are asking of them.

RRX: You're also a musician, and I'm sure teaching music forever keeps it fresh for you. I saw a picture of your pedal rig. It was impressive, and I can only guess that you buy 9 volt batteries by the case. What's your dream combo of, say, five pedals, and why?

JC: Wow! What a question. Well, I would love to keep my loop station. It's a Boss RC300. It has three separate tracks for recording and overdubbing. Each track also has a start/stop. I also have a whole start/stop to stop everything at once. It really is a great loop station. If I had to create an everyday useable rig, I think it would go something like this: Callie '76 Compressor into an AnalogMan, King of Tone, into Strymon Blue Sky then into a Keeley Katana. Versatile for just about any genre and easy to carry. Lol. Much easier than what I was dragging around to gigs for the past couple years.

RRX: You studied classical guitar.

I always think acoustic when I hear that someone is classically trained. But really, it's the metal players that were all classically trained. So I guess it could go either way. What's the best thing about playing acoustic vs. electric?

JC: I think my playing has been acoustic because I never really had a focus on electric. I grew up listening to The Beatles, Hendrix and Led Zeppelin but my early introduction to music was The Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul and Mary, Jim Croce, James Taylor and John Sebastian. I was folk before I was rock, haha. But as I got into middle school and high school I discovered Alice in Chains, Tool, Rush, The Allman Brothers Band, Phish, The Grateful Dead and more and I began to love electric.

I used to play a lot of the rock tunes as I was learning tab and chord structures but I always practiced on my dad's guitars. He had these beautiful guitars. He had a 1960's Gibson B25 and a 1970 Gibson J50. I loved them and the sound they made so I just was drawn to them. I have used the J50 to gig with for the last however many years now and I just love it. It's a beast and has a great low end. It's warm and full and just sounds great. I have a Martin D-18 and I'd rather play the Gibson. Recently I went back to my dad's old 1962 Gretsch Chet Atkins Country Gentleman. Since COVID, I really wanted to focus on changing my direction. This did it lol. Now that I have the space and time, I am diving back into the electric players a lot more.

RRX: You have a new track out that we play on RadioradioX. Can you tell us about it? What inspired it? And is it part of an upcoming EP, or is one coming? And as a side question, do you give your students your music, or do you have any qualm about that?

JC: The new track is called "Slow Jam". It came out of a couple chords I

have been messing with for a about a year now. I have been writing a lot with my brothers-in-law. This came from a meld of all of our styles. Allan and I have been writing music for a long time and we've had success with a few of our tunes like "For the Ride", which we did with Mike Tymus and our song "Call My Own". "Call My Own" was born from a basement session weekend a few years ago that included Mike, Allan, and Derick Borst. Derick has been my brother in music and life since 1999. We used to live to make music and had a band with Matt Bruno called Rooted Philosophy. When I met my wife, I met Allan and we just jammed. It was great. Within the past years Victor Cornette entered the picture. What a great musician as well. Allan, Victor and I worked together to make "Slow Jam". Victor played bass and Allan helped me guide the song melodically. Allan has this style about him and his writing that makes me think of a mix of Glass Animals and Slightly Stupid. I kind of just went that way with it.

RRX: This is where you answer the question I didn't ask. Educate, enlighten, emote - the floor is yours.

JC: I have just completed a studio renovation in my basement (Small Time Studio) and am now ready to finish recording the rest of my first E.P (no good title yet). It should be out in June and has some of the area's best appearing on it. Musicians like Derick Borst, Dave Gleason, Matt Bruno, Mike Lawrence, Brian Chiapinelli, and a host of others. I really like the community that happens when music is being made and to be able to capture it all together on this EP is going to be amazing! I am really excited to put this out and perform again in support of this album. I love the covers gigs a lot. People always love to sing a long and I feed on that but it is time for me to tell my story with my friends.



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DJ Wiz Hoffa and How The Moods Are Made

Producer and DJ Wiz Hoffa always has a good time... in fact, he makes them.

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Music is the distillation of performance of experience. In as many cases as it is elaborate and complex, dare even say cryptic, it is always personal. Before it makes you feel, it make the creator(s) feel, and if they don't, you never hear it.

DJ Wiz Hoffa has been making people feel him since the dawning years of the 1990s, maybe earlier. He's refined his craft over the past thirty years, and his words and sounds have been personal throughout the profession he's built up.

I sit with DJ Wiz Hoffa and we talk the future of mix-tapes.

RRX: In Xperience, we've covered rap and hip hop artists before, but, and maybe I should say this more for myself, it's new territory for me. So let me have you as an ambassador to this part of the local scene. And that is a tall order; I get that. So can you take me on a tour of the scene that you're helping to make?

WH: Well that's a humbling question. Over the years I would hope to think I've helped create a scene that tries to uphold integrity, skill and dedication on the music side and the business side as well. I wanna be the poster boy for showing people what can happen if you never give up your dreams or passions. Even more so I hope my

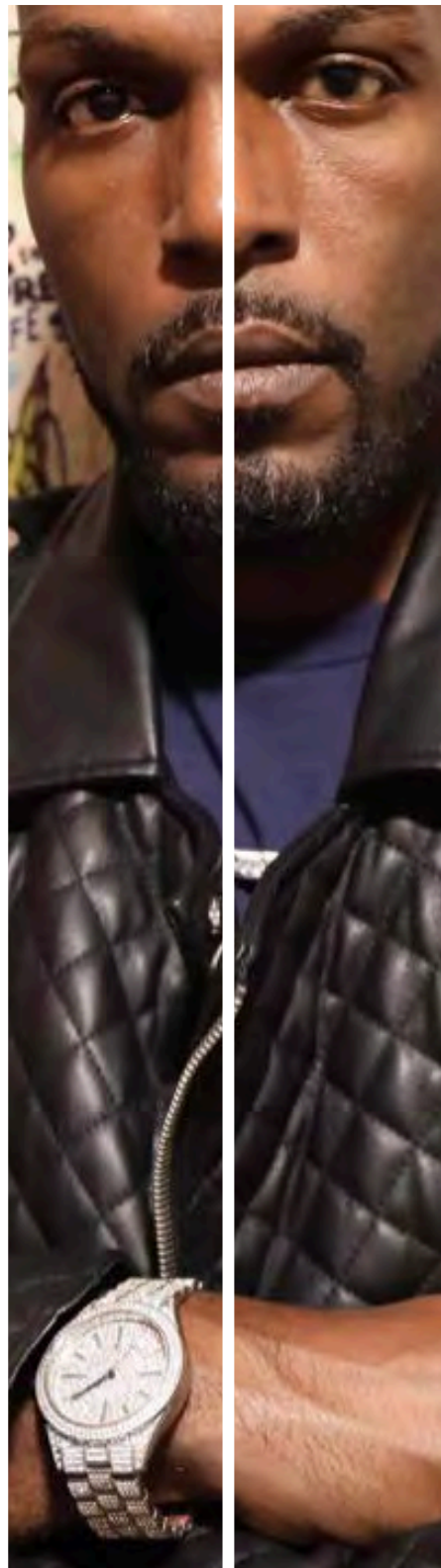
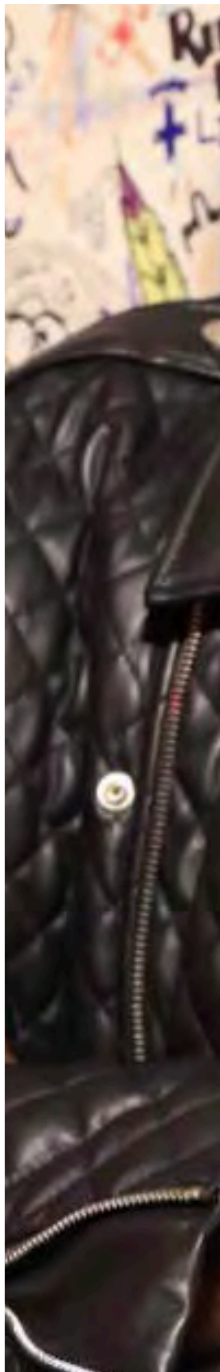
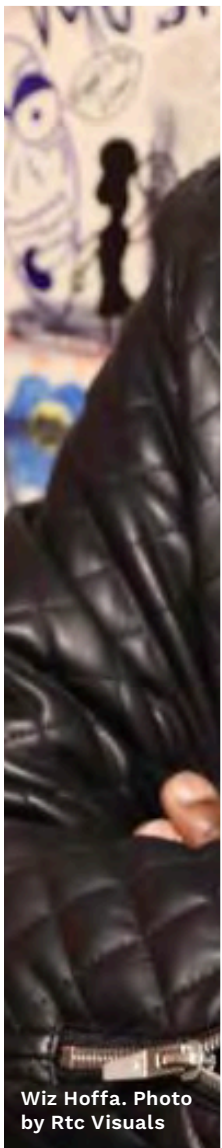
mentality will rub off on my two daughters Amaya Amor & Semadia Rayne. At this point it's important for me to leave a legacy behind!

RRX: I remember in high school, in lunch specifically, you had tapes. You were putting music together at 15-16, and you're still doing it. They say if you do ten-thousand hours of something, you're an expert, and I'd say you qualify. What have you accomplished that you thought you would back then, and what's still on the to-do list?

WH: At that age I think one of my biggest goals was to be heard on the radio. I actually accomplished that at 15 years old. (Shoutout to DJ Money Mike & Slammin Shan from 88.3 WVCR for the opportunity). I think every artist wants to create a dope album or body of work that can be recognized and respected which I'm still working on til this day. I just dropped my first single as a producer titled "I.D.K.Y" available on major digital platforms such as iTunes, Spotify, Apple Music, Google Play etc.

RRX: Music means reinvention if you do it enough. You write, practice perform, and then you gotta do something new, something different, or people will just slap a label on you. Sharks got to swim or they drown. So almost thirty years of performing for you – have there been any meaningful reinventions in your style or approach?

WH: Hell yeah! When you've been in the game as long as I've been reinvention is almost a must. The styles and trends in music change pretty often. I try to keep my musical



Wiz Hoffa. Photo by Rtc Visuals

foundation with little alterations to make things sound fresh and relevant. It really depends on the artist I'm producing for but I'd like to say I'm great at catering to artists of all generations. Nowadays beats are way more bass heavy so that is definitely one of the things I've tried to perfect.

RRX: You have a new podcast, called 'Faces of 518.' I'm looking forward to this, because I'm expecting you to showcase a lot of local talent. So I'll ask you this, because I can relate. The 518 is pretty big, but it does have a limit. Is there enough talent in rap and hip hop and other genres that you'll cover to fill the guest list for a while?

WH: A lot of people would probably expect my podcast to be strictly music/entertainment based. However, I really feel a need to provide different types of content as well. I could literally go for years just focusing on music related guests...that's just how much talent we have in the 518. One of my goals is to also have business owners, politicians, activists etc. I wanna have a good balance to appeal to different interests. You may even see a stripper or two. lol

RRX: You're a DJ, and some people know the skill that goes into what you do, but some people, when they think 'DJ,' they recall their wedding DJ who basically had a big mp3 collection and a repertoire of friendly patter. But that's really not what you do. Can you give us a 'day in the life' of a particularly ass-busting set?

WH: A great set is a memorable one. Our job as DJ's is to create and set different moods. We can make people smile, we can make people cry too. Ultimately we want people dancing and having a great experience non-stop. There's nothing better than taking a crowd on a journey being in full control of people's moods, memories and emotions to the degree where they never forget the great time that they had!

RRX: Freestyle. I'm envious of anybody who can do it. Big green monster jealousy. I mean, at some point, all writers are freestyling, but to do it in front of people, so fast, so 'right there.' Was there any one or more things that you learned along the way that helped you be able to freestyle? Is it all confidence, or are there hacks?

WH: You know what? I've never really considered myself a great freestyler. Freestyling is an amazing skill to have but I've always excelled more putting the pen to paper. I do think every emcee should at least know how... it can get you out of some sticky situations if done right.

RRX: Here is where you answer the questions I didn't ask. Turntables or software? Best headphones under fifty bucks? Educate, enlighten, emote – the floor is yours.

WH: I came up on turntables. I scratch way better on turntables. You can use turntables and software at the same time though. It allows

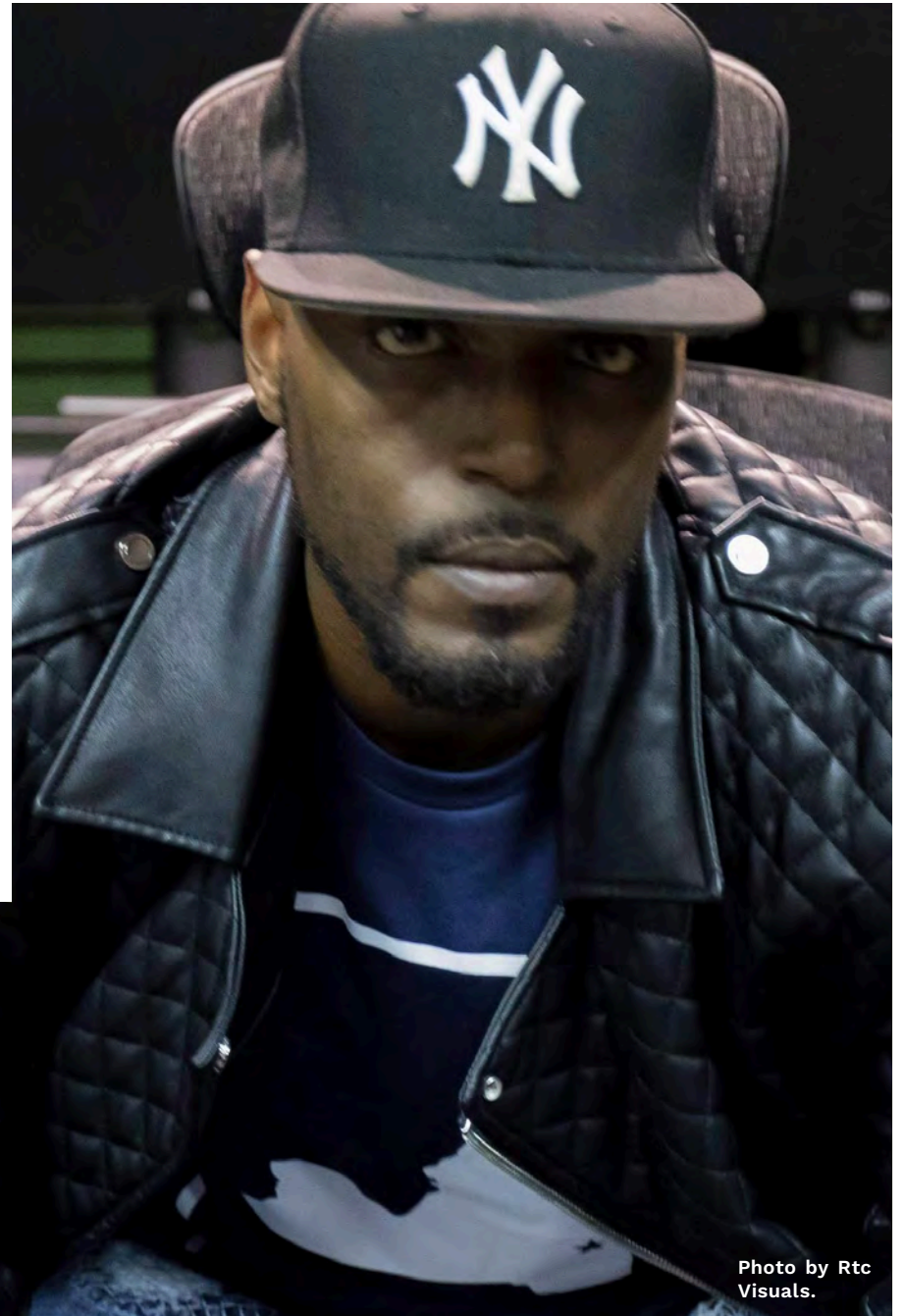


Photo by Rtc Visuals.

you access to all your music without having to lug vinyl around, software has changed the game.... it allows you to do many of the same things just faster. Headphones under \$50? lol I wish.....



...From a Friend

From a place of darkness, author and businessman Marty Keary found something brilliant, and he's sharing.

BY LIAM SWEENEY



(L-r) Gene Colett, Jim Pettit, Marty Keary and Kyle Coletti. Photo provided.

If you're on social media, you've seen your share of inspirational messages. And you may be of a sort that scoffs at them, maybe thinking they're generic or commercial. That's usually until you're having a trouble or two, and then that one message that flashes across your screen ends up just 'clicking' for you. That's how inspiration works.

Marty Keary is a writer with an inspiring message, though he's not necessarily shooting it out in meme form. His book, *Words from a Friend, a Daily Guide to a Purposeful Life*, is out now wherever books are sold.

I sit down with Marty and we talk about cyberpunk nihilism.

RRX: You've just written a book, *Words from a Friend, a Daily Guide to a Purposeful Life*. There is a great interest in inspirational, or "self-help" books these days, and it's a big market. So we're in a bookstore and you're pitching me your book. What do you tell me about it that can't be said about the others?

MK: *Words from a Friend, a Daily Guide to a Purposeful Life* is a mindfulness book. There are 365 daily messages on a myriad of different life subjects and how our higher energy and mindset can attract to us a more beautiful, meaningful and purposeful human journey. At the end of each daily message there is a call to action that invites the reader to infuse the wisdom into their day. At the end of this year of mindful daily practice, we will have raised our awareness of self, others and how our connections and relationships are the true gold we seek, especially the one with ourselves. It's a book about

the power of Love and that we not only possess this healing vibration, we are it. *Words from a Friend* is a catalyst to shifting your mindset from ego to light, from misperception and chaos, to inner peace and the ability to expand beyond limited perception.

RRX: In writing fiction, and probably non-fiction, there's two types of people: "plotters" to write out an outline first, and "pantsers" who write by the seat of their pants. In writing *Words from a Friend*, which one were you? Did you have to organize the points ahead of time, or did it just flow?

MK: My writing career came out of a dark and desperate place I was in in my life. I'd suffered from anxiety most of my life which one year led to an ugly depression. A place I'd never been before. One morning I woke up in the usual awful state of worry and fear when a voice in my head said to sit down and write. Write what you know to be true. I had been studying personal development, positive thought, spiritual practice and the power of Love from over one hundred of the greatest teachers on the subject as a result of wanting to help myself manage the anxiety over many years when this depression hit me. So I decided to listen to this voice and simply write back to myself what I believed about myself in the eyes of Love.

The very first day I wrote bullet points as affirmations which helped. The second day I began to write from my heart and the pen never stopped. It became automatic once I picked a subject. It was as if a valve was opened and all of what I had

practiced to that point in my life spilled out into words that were actually helping me. Writing became a daily healing practice for me. Soon it became my number one healing activity. These words brought me up and out of the hypnosis and immobilized state of fear, into my heart where I could rest and recoup my soul. It was as if I was pushed off a cliff and found my wings in flight. I decided to share just one of my messages on Facebook.

That was 2014. I remember being very apprehensive about hitting the post button on that day. The same voice that told me to write was the same one telling me to hit post, so I did. Over the next couple days I received quite a great reception and realized just how many others smile on the outside but are anxious and depressed on the inside. From this point I had no reservations about writing what had helped me so much. I wrote for two years every day and began to feel as if there was somebody in particular that needed to hear these messages and that made me feel good to keep sharing them. One day I received a friend request from my wife's boyfriend before my wife and I met at age 19. It was strange to get a request from him because as I recall he and I did not like each other lol. So I dismissed the request, lol. But two weeks passed and he sent another request. At this point I look up and say to myself, "you're trying to tell me something here", and I accepted the friend request.

About another week passed and he reached out to me privately and changed my life. He said, "Hey Marty, I've been reading your inspirational posts and I love them, so does my wife. She is the president of a three woman publishing team here in Ohio and she said she'd love to publish your book." I said, "Book??!!" What book? He said she thinks there's a fantastic book to be put together from these daily messages and could you please send her a manuscript. I told him the best I had were two years of Facebook posts. He said print and send them.

A year later, with amazing help, guidance and friendship, Words from a

Friend became a book. The one guy who I would never have imagined to help me up and forward in a beautiful new path, was once considered an enemy. Another lesson of the light was delivered that day. He even drove me the first copy from Ohio to Troy to hand deliver it. There's great energy in and around the creation. Of this book. It has helped many and I hope it helps so many more come into their own power and personal greatness.

RRX: Some people think that life has no purpose, that the universe is cold and indifferent. And even other people agree with that statement, yet I think that the universe being that way is an invitation to create our own purpose or meaning. So what's the line between finding a purpose and finding a purpose that encourages betterment?

MK: Giving is the greatest gift we give to ourselves. If we have the mindset that usually says stuff like, 'the world owes me', 'I'm a victim', 'I'm not good enough, smart enough, strong enough' or any other low vibe thinking, we sabotage ourselves and we begin to believe this fearful thought pattern until it becomes us. Now, in the giving mindset, we move to self-love and giving that higher vibe away as our message to the world. In doing so, we activate our inner power and purpose. We find what makes us tick in this space and we learn to bring our best forth and serve with a new found energy and aliveness. The world isn't great at teaching the language of love, so we must take it on and infuse it into our thoughts, words and actions. From here we've moved up the energy ladder within and we discover that we don't only have one purpose, but many. Each one will be a gift if we put our love into it, for us and for the receiver. Love is a circle. Give it and watch what happens to your life.

RRX: You're involved in Troy Grit, which is a brand that exemplifies the history of Troy. It speaks to a generational feeling of rough self-reliance that has carried the city from its origins in 1789 through soaring heights, progress, destruction, and blight to the unique gem it

is today. What are your plans with Troy Grit?

MK: Troy Grit came as a result of COVID making me watch more movies than usual. I was watching old westerns and I came across True Grit with John Wayne. It's a classic if you've never seen it. They also had a remake a few years ago with Jeff Bridges which was great too. I had just been talking to an old friend about how much fun we had growing up in Troy and how Troy is known for really great people who have this certain tough ingredient about them. So while I'm watching the movie, I recalled our earlier conversation and with a chuckle, I spit out, "that's it!" "They should call it Troy Grit!" Grit was the ingredient we tried to explain. At that point I pictured Uncle Sam in the gritty western hat and coat that John Wayne wore in the movie poster. I pitched the idea to my partners Jim Pettit and Gene Coletti the next day. We all thought it would make a great t-shirt and give Troy the boost it needs after such a crappy year for all of us. We, as the Old Daley family have been in business in Troy for 45 years this year. We wanted to celebrate and give Troy some love. Our vision is already expanding into other cool items we think everyone will love to give and receive. We're also in great discussions with other Troy business people on collaboration and inclusion of the brand with their own. It's been a fantastic reception by our community and we will be giving back in many great ways as we expand. Our motto is friendship above politics, community over competition. We're a brand that wants the best for all. We love to inspire and help the growth of good things. This above all takes the most Grit.

RRX: I was just commenting with a friend on the history, not just of Troy, but of our whole Capital Region, and what effect that should be having on our creative potential. The settlements here, in their various incarnations, are around four hundred years old. What do you think the creative community should draw



"Words from a Friend," by Marty Keary, is available wherever paperbacks are sold. Photo provided.

Continued from Page 19.

from that?

MK: Creativity to me is everything. We are all creators and artists here to express. Each of us has been given the gift of imagination. We also are made up of positive and negative energy which is ours to harness and create with. When we choose to paint intentionally, we begin to steer our destiny rather than unconsciously give that job to the outer world. We must become self-aware and learn to let go of what stifles the good stuff from painting our personal world and a brighter world as a whole. We are all connected by the very creative energy that created us. We are each a cup of this divine ocean, it is in this place that we collaborate rather than compete. Love rather than hate. Thrive rather than strive. Love is the force of the most beautiful creations. Use it as if it were the only brush you own. Start with self. Paint outward.

RRX: Right now, we're all going through a historical time. We're having to face something we haven't faced in a hundred years, and it was deadly then. We're asked to make huge changes, even bigger sacrifices, to protect people we may not even know. How do we get people to find purpose in these changes and sacrifices?


MK: Love is who we are. We never sacrifice when we're considering others, helping them off the ledge of fear and leading with what's best for all. Within every darkness there are diamonds of wisdom and growth to be found. Always look inside to find out where we may need to upgrade old worn out beliefs, stories and convenient excuses that need to be released. Life is a school for our soul and we rise by moving forward in our light and spread it whenever possible. The lessons from COVID all bring us back to the same conclusion that more love is needed, not less. Give your best for a better world.

RRX: This is where you answer the

question I didn't ask. Educate, enlighten, emote – the floor is yours.

MK: My hope is that this next year will be brighter than the last, more beautiful because we're exhausted with the ugly, and that we all realize that family and friendship reign supreme over fear and separation. Much gratitude and love to you all from Daley Hospitality, Troy Grit, Cookie Therapy and Focusmaster Fitness. We do our best to give you the very best. Thank you!





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Colors and Sounds: Paul Zarvis

Born with the fascinating condition of being able to hear colors, Paul Zarvis uses music to share his amazing gift.



BY STEPHANIE BARTIK

Paul Zarvis. Photo by Stephanie Bartik.

Originally from Pittsfield MA in Berkshire County, Paul began his musical career at an early age. Retelling a story from his mother, Paul explains that at three years old she took him for a walk through their Lenox MA neighborhood and walked by a flower bed. His mother, a college professor, pointed to some roses and said to Paul “Aren’t these some pretty flowers Paul?” he replied, “Yes, but the yellow ones sound better.”

His mom knew from that point, that Paul had a gift of sound or music. Later in life, it was found that Paul has a condition known as Synesthesia. In a nutshell, when Paul hears sounds he sees colors in his mind, and when he sees colors he hears sounds. Paul’s mom exposed him to music and enrolled him in lessons. Music was his consuming passion for the rest of his life. He played classical music and at 13 was considered a prodigy but at the

scholarship to Berklee College of Music in Boston MA. But years of playing clubs and living the rock and roll life took its toll and Paul became addicted to drugs and alcohol. It was a problem that nearly cost him his life. He left Berklee without graduating and went on the road with rock bands to earn money.

Drug and alcohol use took its toll as addiction took center stage and eventually took over his life. He was arrested for stealing money to support his habit and it began a string of arrests and convictions which sent him to NY State prisons for the next 14 years of his life. The only music he played was Gospel music in the prison chapels.

Paul had vowed to clean up his act and served his time constructively. Consequently, he was released from prison in March of 2014 with a consuming desire to have music back as the focal point of his life. He met Tanya, who helped him reclaim his life and together they live as a couple supporting and loving each other every step of the way. Paul is living life clean and sober and loving every minute of it.

After prison, Paul settled in Albany and worked at over 14 temporary jobs finally settling on a bus driving and mechanic position which paid the rent but was unfulfilling. Music was still his passion. He began knocking on doors, cold calling clubs, and venues,

age of 15, he began playing in various Berkshire County bands for many

years to come. These include the Zarvis Allen Band, Dollars, Blind Date, The Joe Downen Road Show, and others. He rubbed elbows with many top bands including opening with his band Blind Date for Tower of Power, auditions with David Johansen and the New York Dolls, and Dan Hartman. He also opened for Orleans, Bonnie Raitt, NRBQ, and the Stompers with The Zarvis-Allen Band.

In 1983 he earned a full piano

trying to re-connect with old band-mates but no one would give him the time of day. The local musician and club scene is very tough to get into if one is not from the area. Finally, area rocker Johnny Morse gave Paul a shot in his 2015 Birthday Bash at Chrome Food and Spirits and Paul's reputation as a keyboard player began to grow. He had a brief gig with local band Dashboard Anthem but his work schedule would not allow him to have the weekends off.

Finally, he began playing odd gigs with Johnny Morse or a solo gig here and there and after being inspired by a benefit performance at his mom's assisted living facility in Maine, he began to entertain seniors in the Capital District assisted living facilities as a way to give the gift of music to those who can't get out to hear it. He was steadily getting more exposure and more gigs. He started a new band called The Drama Kings with his

brother, guitarist John Zarvis, bassist Rick Williams and drummer Jimmy Harte while simultaneously writing and recording original music, writing an original score and film trailer for the web series Beyond Scope, (recorded the pilot episode), and sync licensed 13 original compositions through BMI and Songtradr. And then....COVID.

When COVID 19 hit it destroyed the local music scene. The rules and regulations make it almost impossible for a musician to earn a living. Paul focused on the downtime to re-adjust, create a solo act, and learn to work within the confines of COVID law. He was a favorite during the summer at The Lake George Beach Club and King Neptune's Pub. Retiring from the bus company he now plays live shows for a living. He's currently started a show of iconic hit songs and show tunes called Paul Zarvis' Piano Bar and is house piano player for O'Toole's restaurant and The State Room Banquet Hall in

Albany.

Paul looks forward to next summer when again, he will entertain audiences in Lake George, perform with his band the Drama Kings. Playing in rock and jazz bands is something he is also considering once COVID 19 resolves. It's always been his dream to make music his full-time job and now that is what he's doing. It's been a long road but at 61 years old Paul Zarvis shows no signs of slowing down.

Coming full circle, he is again a full-time student at Berklee. This time studying Music Production.



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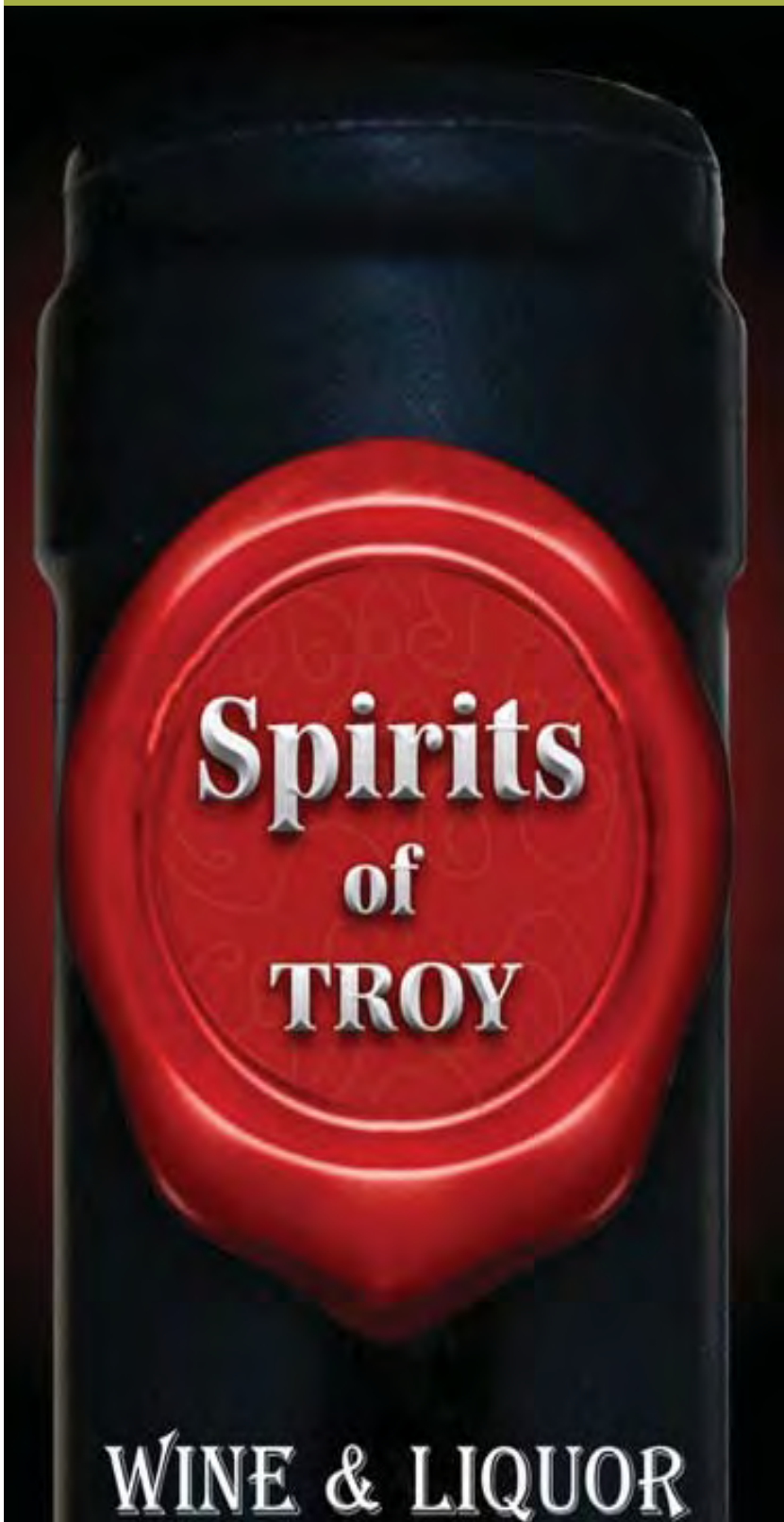
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SASSY Says Top Fashions of 2021

BY SASSY AUBURN

I don't know about any of you, but I find it a little hard to talk about fashion trends right now. I'll be honest, I haven't switched out my summer clothes for winter yet this year because I barely switched them out last year. My closet doesn't need to be yelling "tres chic!" when your daily fashion choices barely venture outside of a pair of leggings and a VS sweatshirt. Oh, and don't forget the slippers...complete with pompoms.

Whether our daily routine includes things that are hot & trendy or not right now, the fashion world is going to tell you what you need to wear in 2021 to look in style. Their hope is that you will flip your closet and turn it into a full blown issue of Vogue. This year? Many of us just might! But if that seems like the only logical way for you to rid yourself of the 2020 blues, more power to you. Do it safely, tastefully and financially responsibly. But make sure you check what's hot in fashion before you empty your growler of loose change. Here's a list of what's hot for women & men according to things to watch for in the coming months, thanks to Harpersbazar.com and dress-trends.com:

A Good Trench – When we break it down, the question is simple: what do we want to wear right now? With this weather, the answer is simple—a coat! A traditional fall-back trench coat is both basic as well as far from basic! Watch for interesting lapels, stylish slits, peplum bottoms, accent buttons

and bold sleeves. This simple jacket can actually be a huge statement piece. Another plus? It also works for both men and women. Just pick your under clothing accordingly. In fact, just pick SOME clothing.

Button Down, XXL Shirt – Ladies will love this fad. You know how we love to walk around the house wearing nothing but our husband's dress shirt and a pair of comfy socks, drinking a cup of our favorite hot beverage? Me either, but it makes for a hell of a coffee commercial. This year that baggy shirt is going to be to all the thing, matched with everything from jeans to flowy skirts and more. What makes this trend unique is that the tops will be designed for women but sized for a man. Casual baggy yet still chic.

Patterns for All – Even with the year long shit-show we've had to deal with, it was obvious that animal prints (especially leopard) were extremely hot in women's fashions and accessories all year long. What is kind of funny is that what is long gone for females is now is the hot Spring trend for men. Watch for pants & dress shirts as well as watchbands & accessories when shopping for the guy in your life with safari-animal styles and colors in mind. But if animal prints are out for women, what's in now? The gardens, my dears! Bold, bright and loud garden florals are the styles that will grace stores soon. The key word is impact. From daily casuals to red carpet couture, you will find



Photo provided.

bright, bold and neon floral prints and the accessories to match. And the color selections of these prints will amaze us all.

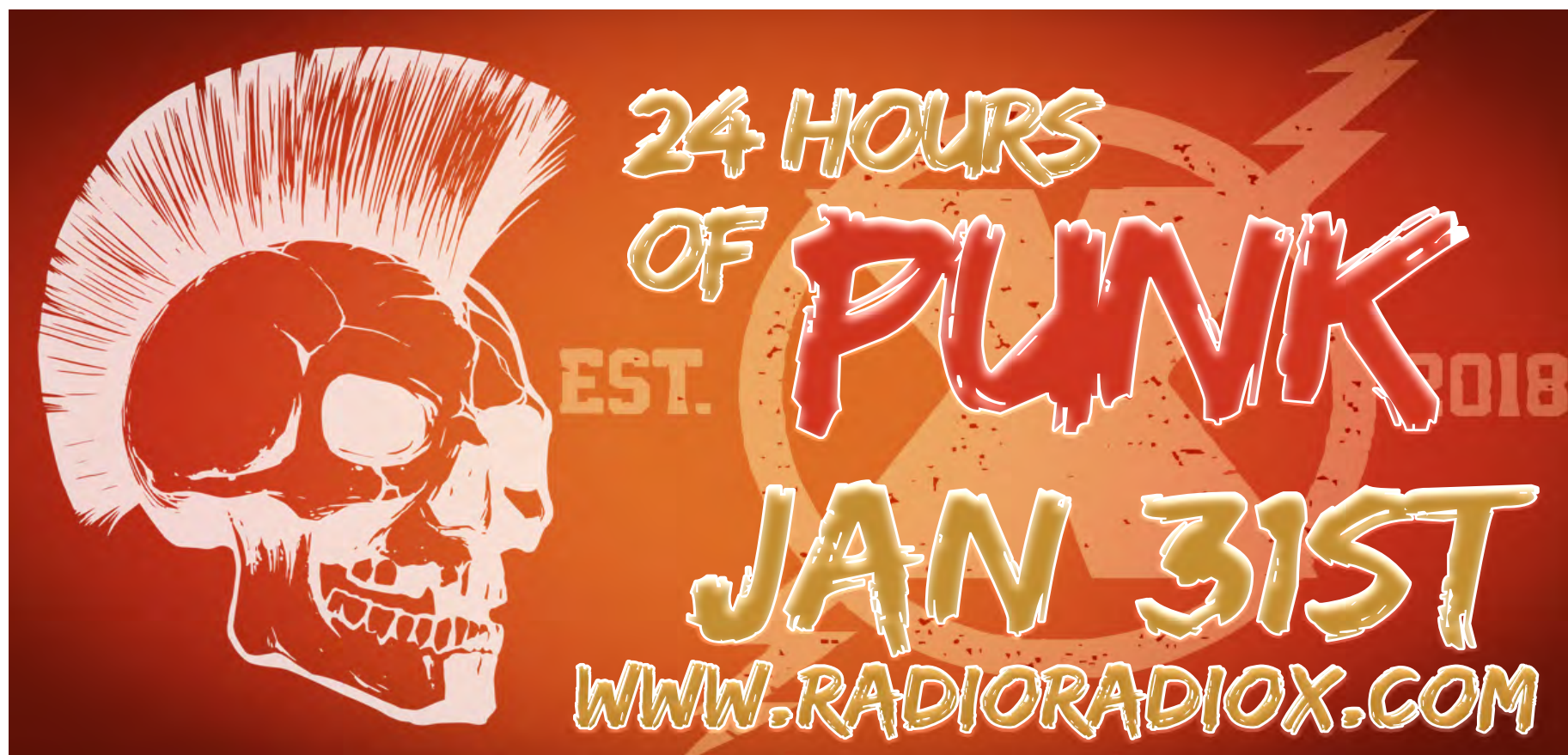
Khaki, Khaki, Khaki – Ah, tan... it's not just for the beach any more. Adding different shades of khaki to your wardrobe can give any outdated closet the boost it deserves. What's great is this works for anyone. Don't hesitate to pair up a black top and dress jacket with a pair of formal khaki pants to give you a super crisp look without it coming across as off-putting. Women can even add sequined scarves, shrugs, denim, or even a retro graphic tee with their khaki's to look sharp yet casual OR even professional. There are endless shades so don't limit yourself to just one.

Live and Let Tie-Dye – All my hippie friends unite! I have to say, I had already jumped on this bandwagon before it even left the building. It started

with a gift card, a free shipping code and a love for a special edition pair of Chuck Taylor tie-dyed sneakers. I had to process if these sneakers were really my style. Well, they must be because I think I've worn them every day since they arrived. Whether you want to try your skill at making some dyed fashions yourself or if you'd prefer to let the professionals handle it, it doesn't matter. Just enjoy the art. Including maxi-dresses, sweats, denim, and yes... masks... tie dye is here and we couldn't be happier. I'm sure Jerry G would "highly" approve.

The next season will soon be upon us and whether we like it or not, fashions they are a 'changing. But if 2020 taught us anything, it's that comfort and individuality are VERY important to us. When it comes to the future of fashion, I think the jury is still out on a lot of things. Like bras. Maybe pants in general. And slippers should definitely

be approved footwear for work. Whether we like what's new and trendy or not, it's going to happen anyways. So pick the things you would like to add to your closet, then rock them like no one else. Make the looks your own. Individuality is definitely taking the reins. Just like the iconic Coco Chanel would say, "Fashion changes, but style endures."





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