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February 2023

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Jeff Prescott

Area drummer picks up technique while on the mend.

BY OP CALLAGHAN

Jeff Prescott. Photo provided,

I first met Jeff Prescott a few years ago, backstage at a benefit show. We were both hanging around in the green room, admiring a snare drum that had been signed by a bunch of local drummers, which was to be auctioned off for charity. Jeff, whose signature was not yet emblazoned on the drum, was being encouraged by a bunch of people to “Go on! Sign it! What are you waiting for?” I’ll never forget his reluctance to sign, as though he didn’t feel that he had earned the right to sign alongside so many talented players. Humility and drums do not typically mix; we’re loud, rude and mostly attention whores. Not Jeff Prescott.

Jeff has been playing around the area for many years

and is well known to most of the musicians in the area. His work with Bluz House Rockers, Rev Tor Band, Brian Kane and The Beginning, Dead Man’s Waltz, and Soul Sky, is exceptional. He’s a super clean player, who plays with finesse and subtlety. His stylistic changes after a traumatic leg injury are just one example of his devotion to the art of drumming. He’s a talented guy and super humble. I’m glad to know him, and love to see him play. So how about a nice welcome for this month’s featured player, Jeff Prescott!

RRX: Welcome to Capital Region Time Keepers! How old were you when you started playing drums, and what were the circumstances?

JEFF PRESCOTT

Jeff Prescott finds opportunity in the worst of conditions, making him the best of drummers.

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TYLER JOHNSTON

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Author and musician pays tribute to guitar virtuoso Merle Travis.

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Jeff Prescott. Photo by
Stephanie Bartik.

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JP: When I was a little kid, my family watched a lot of The Muppet Show. My parents always told me a story of me pulling out all of the pots and pans and wooden spoons and setting up shop on the kitchen floor as if I was the real “Animal”, the Muppets character. I must have been about three years old at the time and to say my mom was pissed might be a bit of an understatement. She was right bent!

But I was into formulating rhythms as a young kid, like six years old. I was given my first drum kit by a friend at our church who was getting rid of his. I was around ten at the time. My parents were reluctant to let me have drums, I think they knew it would be years of torture because they could see that I was actually into the drums. I didn't set up the drums and start learning to play in earnest until I was 13. My poor family hahahaha! They were all as cool as they could be with it.

RRX: Who were some of your earliest influences?

JP: Nirvana's Dave Grohl was the guy that I first listened to where the gears meshed for me. I was super into Nirvana when I first started playing but it was like, “Oh that's what the hi-hat is for.” I was heavily influenced by Ringo Starr. I loved the Beatles as a kid. My mom got me into them and I loved how Ringo approached playing songs. I thought Dave Krusen and Dave Abbruzzese, Pearl Jam's first drummers, were great and I learned a lot of ideas from the grunge era. I was also immediately drawn in by the sounds and grooves that came out of John Bonham of Led Zeppelin. As a teenager, I was getting a lot of ideas, listening to the Allman Brothers Band, The Dead, some Zappa, Pink Floyd, and Phish. John Fishman was a big one for a lot of years. His ability to apply the basic ideas from every genre and make it interesting and cool was something I couldn't get over. I was latched on to his playing for some number of years.

RRX: Tell me more about your first kit?

JP: That first drum kit, the one I was given by a friend at church, was a set of TKO's. They were like particle board drums, made in Japan in the 80's. I learned a lot from them! My dad suggested that it was common for drummers in the 60's and 70's to play drums with no bottom heads and maybe that could be a cool sound. So, rather than take the heads off by removing the tension rods and rims, I cut them off with a razor blade. You know, stupid kid stuff hahahaha! A drummer friend of the family eventually helped me get them back in proper order so I could learn how to tune the drums as well as play them.

RRX: Talk about your current set-up.

JP: I've become a fan of Ludwig drums. My road kit (that's what I call it) is a set of mid-2000s Ludwig keystones. They're a midline, three-ply (maple-poplar-maple) run that were offered by Ludwig until maybe 2019? This drum kit sounds great! I use them a lot and have some great recordings, studio and live, of them.

I'm a big fan of Zildjian's Constantinople line and I like Istanbul's Agop series. I have one Agop cymbal that my buddy Chris Little cut strategically placed holes in, giving it a trashy wash that is nasty when placed correctly in the context of a groove. He even put a sticker on it with a logo that looks like him and includes my name. It's like a custom cymbal and I love it!

I carry two snares with me, wherever I go. One is a Ludwig, 5X14 hand-hammered black beauty, and the other is a DW Craviotto, 6.5X14 solid maple. They're both great snare drums!

RRX: Do you play matched grip, or traditional? Tell me about changing

Continued on page 45..



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Kilashandra

Celtic music isn't just a genre, it's a passion



BY LIAM SWEENEY

Kilashandra. Photo provided.

One music that never fails to soothe me is Celtic music. I can just feel the stress and the tension of the day wash off, and something crisp and green take its place. It is always welcome, and in turn always welcoming, and there's a heaviness and a frivolity that can dance with each other.

Kilashandra is not a strictly Celtic band. They are a Celtic-inspired jam band, and while my questions center around the Celtic part, I hope you will see the band as they will show you below. Maybe we can get them to jam.

I reach out to Mark Emanatian, Eileen Markland, Chris Gil and Tom Dolan of Kilashandra and we discuss the rarity of four-leaf clovers.

RRX: Celtic music is instantly recognizable, and it makes people feel a certain way, like a gentle breeze on a hilltop of rolling grass, or the bow of a ship destined for the promise of the New World. So the sound is unmistakable. Do you think Celtic lyrics, if read without the music, would be unmis-

takable as Celtic? Why or why not?

ME: I think the deep rivers of Irish literature, poetry, storytelling and history would make Celtic lyrics unmistakably Irish.

RRX: The music of Ireland is a tradition that goes back centuries, and listening to Celtic music, you can hear themes that, though timeless, did originate in a time. But it wasn't just Ireland, was it? How much of Celtic music comes from Ireland, and how much from Irish immigration to America?

ME: All music is transformed as it intersects with new places and new experiences.

EM: Vocalist Chris Gil has an interesting story. I'm all about those, stories. But his was an impromptu chance to sing at the Pepsi Arena, and a standing ovation. If that doesn't tell a person they got something, right? So something started shit right there, something inside, a switch from a private thing to a public pursuit. Tell us about it, will

CG: It was an honor and a thrill to sing the National Anthem at the Pepsi Arena and receive a

standing ovation. I put the same energy into my singing whether it's to a full crowd or 1 person in the back of a pub. It's all about connecting with the audience.

But I really like singing and playing with this band Kilashandra. Mark Emanatian writes some great songs and is a master guitar player. Eileen Markland is a force of nature. Tom Dolan holds us together. We really connect with each other and we let the audience in on it too.

I'm looking to forward to some big gigs we have coming up: opening for the Young Dubliners at the Colonial Theater in Pittsfield and the Watertown Irish Festival. And of course, we'll be hitting the pubs from the Berkshires to the Catskills to the Adirondacks.

Come see us at a big show or a pub, I love singing to people

RRX: Eileen Markland is a Berklee trained composer and arranger, with a universe of talent with different instruments, having played with more folks than can fit in a small club with the tables removed.

One thing I read was that you work with music for visual media. How does playing for visual media differ from playing for the crowd?

EM: Harmony is the reason I wake up each morning and endless melodies accompany every activity and quiet moment throughout my day. Composition is the only place in life where I experience true freedom. I can create and mix any scenario I'm craving or feeling by crafting a series of chords, melodies and vocal/ instrumental combinations which then have the potential to perfectly express what I need, if I get it right. Yes, I can tell you what I'm feeling in words, but a musical description is three dimensional, even four dimensional! Composition (and improvisation), for me, is the deep exploration and expression of the state of my soul.

Live performance is a unifying, raw experience that creates a shared sense of community and, really, nothing less than pure love between the people performing and those watching and listening. It's a social experience with both tangible qualities, such as dollars earned and new friends made, and intangible qualities such as relieved anxiety and the lessening of feelings of loneliness. I deeply believe that live music has been and always will be one of the staples

to a peaceful society on a worldwide scale. For me, personally, my best friends are the musicians in my life. The music we create together and the real bonds that come with this ride keep me happy and sane in all corners of my life.

RRX: Mark Emanatian, you come from a background I'm very aware of; the blues. Coming to Celtic from blues, and going back again, must be an interesting experience. It seems that they are very different music with different conventions and origins, different historical contexts, so on. What is the common thread that unites them?

ME: First off, they come from a deeply emotional story...and tough histories of people oppressed...the music arises from that...and the music has several similar qualities based around major and minor pentatonics...you can hear a lot of the crossover in bluegrass music that was influenced by both of these musical rivers.

RRX: Improvisation is my favorite quality in music. If my brain wasn't so blues-soaked, I would've hopped on to the jazz train and would still be a passenger. Tom Dolan, you are an improviser. In Celtic music, is improvisation the same as it is in jazz, or is it more structured? Is there phrasing that you have

in Celtic music that you base on?

ME: There is not a lot of bass in traditional Irish music. Often uilleann pipes are used for drone or acoustic guitar or bouzouki are used in place of the bass to add harmony and movement to songs and tunes. Irish music does not generally use chromaticism or altered and extended chords. So, there is not much similarity between improvising in Irish music and jazz. However, there is modal playing, and the use of pedal tones in common and that is useful for improvising in both genres. And listening to each other. Listening helps. It is using intensity, volume, rhythmic variations to push the tempo to move the song along, hopefully to greater heights, or down to support the lyrics. I have been playing in bands with Mark for 50 years. We have a good understanding of what each other might play. Mark and I have played with Eileen in various groupings for over ten years. Chris is an inventive rhythm guitar, acting as a catalyst, often playing bodhran rhythms, propelling the songs forward. We have a shared vocabulary that allows us to have a conversation on stage. Sometimes full group improvisation can break out. But above all the playing must support the song.



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Gozer

Rock will be around as long as dopamine is.



BY LIAM SWEENEY

Gozer. Photo by Amy Klemme.

I love rock. It's such an open platform. It's so easy to come up with something absolutely original, absolutely fresh, and still absolutely rock. A good rock band can take you over the edge and throw you a life-raft. And it is this journalist's opinion that rock will never die.

Gozer is a good old fashioned rock band with a heavier edge and interesting lyrics. If you get a chance to catch them locally, it will be a well-spent penny. Or a ten or a twenty, with inflation.

I reach out to Gozer and we talk about crisp distortion.

RRX: A band name can draw people. I'm not saying a funny name, or a name with some double-entendre, but just a cool sounding name. Beyond that,

though, people want to know a little bit more. I love it when bands introduce themselves in a cool way on social media. So I'll ask you to introduce yourself in a cool way. Who are you?

GZR: First off, thanks for the compliments and thanks for reaching out to us! We'll give the cool introduction a shot, but don't get your hopes up...we're not that cool. Gozer is a 4-piece rock band with a sound that has been described as a cross between Black Sabbath & Queens of the Stone Age. In addition to writing music for ourselves and various podcasts, we aspire to be known as a group who can consistently deliver a tight, energetic, and fun performance. We also want to be known as a group who is easy to work with. The band consists of: Mykah

Dillenger (vocals), Nick Masucci (drums), Sean Murphy (bass), and Nick Kossor (guitar).

RRX: I read that you were putting the finishing touches on an album at the end of October. Depending on when this gets to you, it may be very old news. But if it's very old news, you're probably working on a new album right now. So whatever album you've just finished, or are still working on, tell us all about it.

GZR: The album has a blend of catchy riff driven tracks with tunes that have a more contemporary rock vibe. Lyrically, we explored some superficial themes like our appreciation of horror movies. On other songs, we harnessed deeper emotional themes that are relatable to anyone. Needless to say, we are really excited to release it! All the tracks are

recorded and are in the process of being mixed/mastered by Tim Lynch of The Recording Company. He's great to work with. The band members all have our 9-5s and life happens from time to time, so things got pushed back just a bit in order to give the songs the attention they deserve. We also recently filmed a music video with the amazing Mirth Films, and the plan is to drop a single with the video before releasing the album. In a perfect world, everything will be all set by late January or early February. We're also working on new songs for next year.

RRX: Music grows and it evolves, sometimes so much you have to call it a new style of music. But rock has been going steady for a while now. Do you think that rock is something we can constantly hammer away at? Do we need to evolve rock and make it "new" or is it as good as it gets?

GZR: In our opinion, "rock" is a feeling. It's a palpable response to sounds. Whether those sounds are from chugging riffs in C# standard, or big open chords on an acoustic guitar, or blast beats on the drums, it's about how it makes you feel...like riding a dopamine train. We think rock will always be there, regardless of the trends. Dopamine never goes out of style and we agree with you that rock will never die.

Artists should continue to explore, experiment, and express themselves however they want to. If that's the foundation of the art, evolution is inevitable, and we shouldn't have to worry about the need to make rock "new". These are great questions man, thanks again for chatting with us.

RRX: There's always "that" show. Actually, there are two of them, like the two wolves we all have inside us. There's the good show we'll never forget, and there's the bad show we'll never forget. What was the best show you ever had so far? Describe it. And let's do the worst show you ever had, and describe that too.

GZR: On the positive side, one that sticks out for us was a Super Dark gig at Desperate Annie's this past summer. The set felt tight and we were all in the pocket. The crowd had great energy and was really receptive to what we were laying down; the other bands were cool to hang out with also. Our worst show makes the cut for reasons beyond our control so to that we say "c'est la vie". In the years to come, we're sure that there will be shows that dethrone those moments. We're putting in the work to make sure there are exponentially more good shows than bad ones but hey, the bad shows all come with teach-

able moments, right?

RRX: Part of what makes a show good or bad is where you play. Now there are a lot of factors that go into a venue other than the place itself; the people, both that run the place and the people that show up. But there are two types of venues – the big venues and the small venues. Dollars for dollars and you had to pick, which one?

GZR: We'll let ya know as soon as we get some "big venue" data to compare!

RRX: We're none of us alone in this gig. We rarely go up on a stage and play by ourselves. We don't always know who we're playing with but do meet people along the way that we groove with. We make friends. Who are your ride or die fellow bands? Who (locally) would you love to play with that you haven't yet?

GZR: Honestly, we appreciate and love EVERY band/artist we've played with or encountered. They have all been incredibly supportive and we hope the same could be said about us. As far as local artists that we haven't played with yet, we would welcome the opportunity to perform with Joe Mansman and The Midnight Revival Band. That would be a cool rock show.



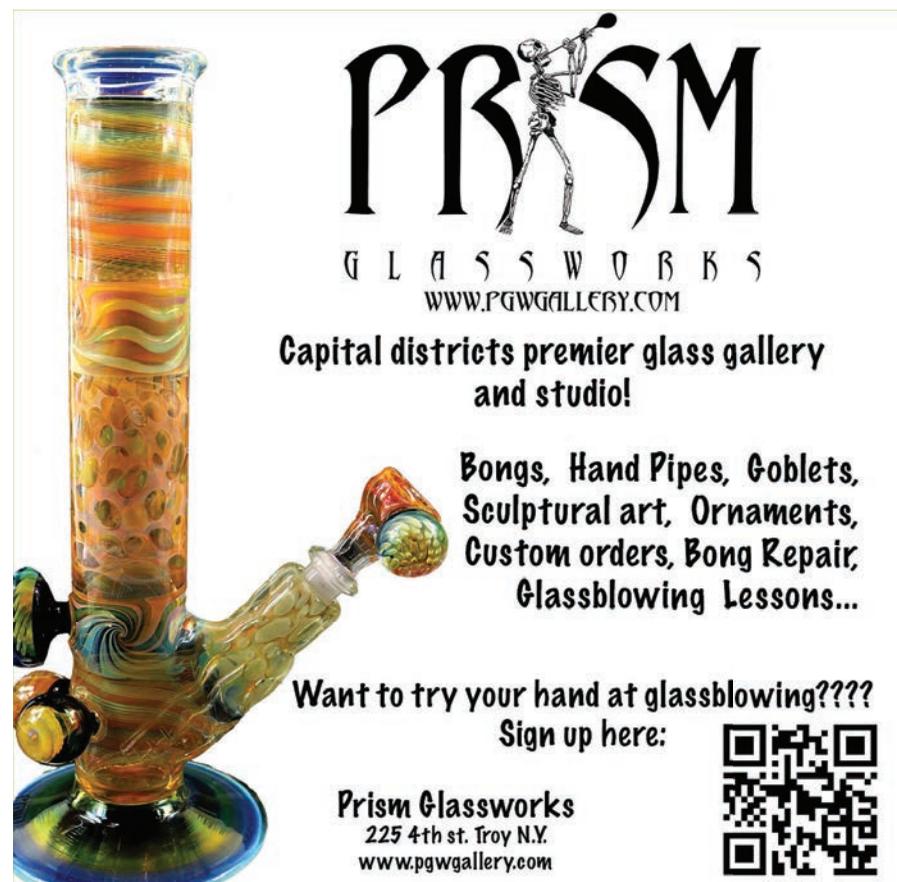
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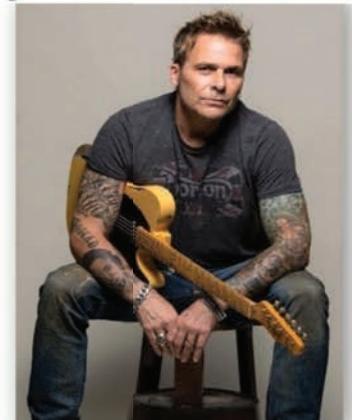


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JJ Savage and Ashley Purdy Form Supergroup

Bonding over music through dark times



BY ROB SMITTIX

JJ Savage. Photo by Stephanie J Bartik.

RRX: So how many different music projects do you have going on these days?

JJ: I've got my solo project which has been running a few years now since I went to California. And then...for the past year as well I've been working with Ash Purdy, who's the old bass player from Black Veil Brides. We've been writing and sending each other sh*t for the past few years. It was weird. At the moment I reached out to him on Instagram, we were both going through dark moments in our lives. It was really cool to start writing music with somebody. It's a different place from where it's coming from, not just hey let's write some songs.

RRX: That's pretty encouraging man. Black Veil Brides are pretty big these days too.

JJ: Yeah, they're doing good and I think this project with Ash could be bigger!

RRX: Nice! What's the band called?

JJ: I don't think we have a name announced just yet. I don't want to say too much about that.

RRX: You just played in Albany not that long ago, that was your solo act, correct?

JJ: It's the solo act JJ Savage. It was weird because the past few years I've been touring with Andy Galeon from Death Angel and Michael Butler from Exodus and those guys had to cancel the week before, so I had to manage to put together a full level line up and get those guys to learn the songs and rehearse two times during the week of Thanksgiving and all of that sh*t. The week before I got into a bar fight. It was not a fun time but once we got to the show I'm like f**k yeah, let's do it!

RRX: Wow, sounds like it's been a wild ride. But when you are a songwriter and a musician, I know you've got to stay creative, or you'll go nuts.

JJ: I just had a parent of one of our younger LA based bands hit me up and said our daughter is a huge fan and she wants to be a rockstar and all of this, what are your recommendations? In my head I think just don't f**king do it.

(Both laugh)

JJ: I said whatever path you end up going down, make sure it's about the music no matter what. Don't get distracted by record labels, producers or money. As long as it's about the music and the music is good, you'll do fine. You'll find people that actually want to do it because they like it. As long as the music is good and you give a f**k about it, it always comes back to that.

RRX: True that.

JJ: I'm just writing songs with Ash and sending it back and forth between Nashville and Oakland or wherever I'm at. That's been working really well for us. We have Daughtry's producer and it's coming out better than I thought it was going to be. Because when I hit him up, I had never met the guy before. I'm just this f**king guitar player on Instagram, when he got out of Black Veil Brides, I hit him up like a week later, like let's write some music and sh*t. He was like let's write one song and see how it comes out

and next thing you know, we have like ten songs ready to go on an album.

RRX: That's dope!

JJ: He's got no ego. Usually when you hit guys up like that, from bands like that, they won't even read your f**king message. He answered in a minute or two probably and that's cool.

RRX: That's really cool and that's rock n roll. The difference between that and let's say the hip hop industry is that if I hit someone up of that pedigree and that caliber and asked for a collaboration in the hip hop world, they might say yes but there's a price tag that will come along with it. That's a big deal because to me it's like do you want to make music together or not?

JJ: With that genre, there's really no instruments being played, everything is on like Ableton and you can copy and paste your beats and your choruses. You could throw together an album in a day or two but with a rock album it could take a year or two, sometimes three. It costs a lot more money too.

RRX: Aw man, you're not kidding. My band has been working on an album for almost three years now. So, I get it.

JJ: People just don't understand that. They want

more music and they want it faster, that's how it is nowadays but it's like please give us a year to make this album. Nobody's buying sh*t, it's all Spotify and they don't f**king pay you sh*t so... Record labels don't give you a budget anymore, where they say here's a million dollars go make an album and get yourself a couple of ounces of cocaine to power through it!

(Both laugh)

RRX: The good ol' days.

JJ: It's gone but it's important that people like you try to keep pushing for musicians, bands and the rock stuff. There's too much of the other sh*t, you know pop and country, which is all good. I love a lot of that but there's really just too much of it.

RRX: Well it's pop, it's popular and unfortunately a lot of what has mass appeal isn't timeless. It's good for a few months and then it's old.

JJ: Exactly. Like Hendrix, you know? Nobody's ever going to forget Purple Haze or sh*t like that will stick around for eternity.

RRX: It definitely will. I was at a show the other day and everybody there was pretty old. A lot of times now when I go to the younger shows I might actually end up being one of the older guys but I was

surely one of the younger people at this one. I leaned over to my friend and said man there's a lot of old people here and he says yeah, thank God because without old people the music scene as we knew it is dead. We need them.

JJ: 65% of the crowd at our shows are 45-year-olds or 55 year old people. I love it because they respect it more and actually have appreciation for what we're doing and they know good music from bad music because they grew up with a lot of good music. It's good to have the other 35% of the crowd be younger because they're being exposed to something that is actually good for once. They have fun and it's just a good mixing pot. It's good to have everybody in one crowd. If you go to a Metallica show I guarantee many people will be 60, married and miserable. You know? Which is cool.

RRX: Totally.

JJ: But for local shows, it's good to have people coming out to the same clubs they were 20 years ago, I think that's rad.

RRX: Well, that's the thing and that was the observation that the older music fans are keeping it alive but like you said on the flipside we need the younger audience too. This thing has to keep going.



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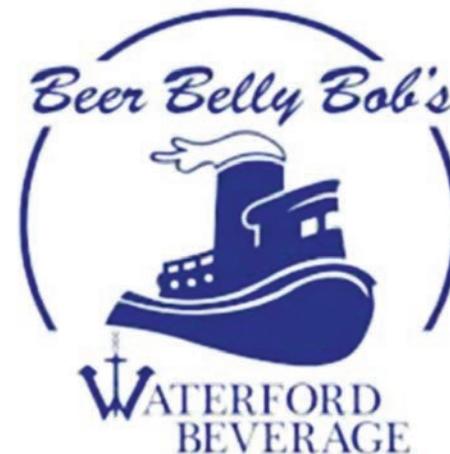
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Tyler Johnston

Canadian actor, “Stewart” from Hulu hit series Letterkenny, skid.

As a writer, not like this, but as a fiction writer, it’s my job to describe a character and make you love them or hate them. If you’re indifferent to them, back to the drawing board. But an actor has to become another person and make you love them or hate them. Infinitely harder, mostly because all they have to work with are the words of people like me.

The show Letterkenny’s resident misfit ‘Stewart’ is both loved and hated, often at the same time. He is played masterfully by Canadian actor Tyler Johnston. He’s been in a number of television shows, including Supernatural and Less Than Kind.

I sit down with Tyler and we discuss the skids.

RRX: Letterkenny has categories of people. Wayne and Dary and Squirrely Dan are hicks; Stewart is a skid. Stewart is an outcast, basically, in a town of five-thousand, which is different than being an outcast in New York or L.A. It’s an interesting dynamic with the other characters. What do you think keeps a guy like Stewart in a town like Letterkenny?

TJ: Well, for one, he’s living in his mom’s basement, you know, rent these days are higher than ever. If you’re getting free rent, and your mom’s not kicking you out into your later years, then a guy like Stewart is going to hold on to that with both arms and both legs. And you can have your misfit friends over in the basement, run your illicit activities, essentially free, that’s a pretty good deal for a guy in Stewart’s position.

RRX: Do you think it’s anything more than free rent? If Stewart had the money, do you think he would go somewhere like New York and LA?

TJ: For a couple of minutes there, we went to the big city of Toronto, love brought Stewart to the city, you know – his chivalrous nature brought him to the big city of Toronto, but you know, I think there’s something to be said about small town folks. Many of them move to big cities, but there’s a familiarity of a small town – knowing your neighbor and your neighbor knowing you. People might leave for a couple of years and go to college, get a job, but it does seem like a lot of them circle back to their small town that they came from.

I think for Stewart, he’s got a little clique there, Roaldie and Connor and Darrien, and he’s still vying for Katy’s affection, and he gets the opportunity, so he’s got goals he still wants to attain in Letterkenny.

RRX: As mentioned, Stewart is an outcast. But he has friends, and he is the leader of these friends. And in some situations, Stewart leads the town on different ventures. He’s almost a “leader in exile.” What is Stewart’s view of leadership? What leader(s) would he look up to?

TJ: Oh my goodness. It depends on which season you ask. In some situations,



BY LIAM SWEENEY

Tyler Johnston. Photo from Film Daily.

he certainly runs it like it's a dictatorship. But he has all sorts of political views. One day he'll be a socialist, the next day, he'll talk about communism. He'll talk to alt-right people on the internet. That's the cool thing about the skids, is they're kinda ever-evolving, and, I don't know if it's 'evolving,' but they're always changing. I don't want to say Stewart would be following some of the dictators from our past, but he might take some things that he found useful in controlling his subjects, which is essentially what Stewart does in the basement there, his palskis, so. Couple of seasons where there were other skids vying for the crown, and Stewart had to shoot them down with some well-placed dance moves.

RRX: Stewart represents something in Canada, America and everywhere. He's the artist in the school full of jocks, the gamer geek, the theater kid. His presence in Letterkenny evens it out, making it more than just 'hick humor' or strictly Canadian. Have fans ever reached out who've appreciate Stewart in their own lives?

TJ: Absolutely, yeah. For sure. There are people who've reached out and have been what some may consider 'outsiders,' and appreciate Stewart and the skids' willingness to just be themselves, no matter how weird or how bizarre that looks. And that was something we established very early on, me and my costars as skids. It's like if we don't fully jump into this behavior, we're not doing justice to those who are sometimes on the fringes of small towns, or cities, or stuff like that. It's always nice to hear from fans who can relate to the skids. It's sort of a wide group of people that kind of fit under that category, like you were describing earlier, that 'hicks' tend to be that same standard type, and athletes or hockey players or baseball players, or football players. You know, there's these stereotypes that come with some of those factions, where the skids, you could be a cybergoth, you could be a weightlifter, you could be a drug dealer – you could cover most things on that outsider spectrum, and there's lots of room to grow.

So yeah, I've certainly received some messages. It's also to see people to dress up as Stewart and Roald and the skids for Halloween; I don't think that's ever going to get old to me.

RRX: You aren't just Stewart from Letterkenny. I've seen you in other roles, and one, I was shocked to find out, because it was such a departure, I didn't recognize you. It was of the angel Samandriel on "Supernatural". Now we are big fans of that show, and we've heard that "Supernatural", auditioning for it,

was a rite of passage for Canadian actors. Is that true?

TJ: I got an interesting little tidbit, Liam, I absolutely was Samandriel in season eight. Alfie/Samandriel. But I was even in "Supernatural" earlier. Season one, episode seven. I was in the "Bugs" episode, which is, a lot of "Supernatural" fans considered the worst episode of the entire series. So that's something I've been able to hang my hat on for the last 15 years. So, I was in that when I was 18 years old, one of the first jobs I had received any sort of payment for. I had done a lot of student films stuff before that. "Supernatural" season one was one of the first jobs I had. And then there was a bunch of years they couldn't audition me. Being a Vancouver Canadian actor in particular, you'll see all sorts of your peers and friends popping up on that show from time to time. Even Nathan Dales, who plays Dary, was on

Me and Evan (Stern), who plays Roald, every time we get invited to a group scene, we're all at dinner or we're all at the bar, it's like 'Hey, thanks for inviting us. Thanks for letting us out of the basement.'

"Supernatural" as well. I believe Kaniehtiio Horn, who plays Tanis, I believe she was on it as well. There's a couple of "Letterkenny" folks who pop up.

So absolutely a rite of passage, and to get to be Samandriel in later seasons, was incredible. I remember putting on the hotdog uniform, which is a striped red and white hotdog vending outfit and just feeling so, so ridiculous. And then getting a few episodes out of it. And it's been pretty amazing now, being part of this SPN fandom. They're so outgoing, and just so large and expanding every day. So, I've had the opportunity to do a couple of conventions with "Supernatural" castmates and stuff like that, and that's always 12/10 good time.

RRX: Stewart started out by being "Letterkenny's" meth dealer. Which you would think would make him super unsympathetic, but the show turned it around into just one more ridiculous thing about Stewart. But I noticed real change in him as the seasons progressed. He really grows into being more ac-

cepted. What do you think drove him to evolve?

TJ: That was always something we wanted with Stewart and the skids, Talked season one with Jacob, the director and one of the writers, and we're like 'I want to make Stewart the evil genius of these first couple of seasons. Even if he's not effective, in his own brain that's what he thinks he is. Like when you're a young person and you have this vivid imagination, and you're a little bit of an outsider, and maybe there's some drugs involved, like I think he was a little disillusioned the first couple of years. When he started to gain that acceptance, he was like 'hey, actually this doesn't feel so bad being part of a community.'

I think part of his nature was that it was a defense mechanism, shooting down some of the collaboration, the other groups' olive branches to socialize; I think he'd been hurt too many times and wasn't wanting to open himself to be hurt again. I think especially after he fell in love with Gae and realized, 'hey, you know, relationships with other humans in nice ways aren't so bad,' it inspired him to continue to grow with the other groups.

Me and Evan (Stern,) who plays Roald, every time we get invited to a group scene, we're all at dinner or we're all at the bar, it's like 'Hey, thanks for inviting us. Thanks for letting us out of the basement.' Me and Evan and the actors thank Jared (Keeso) the writer, for inviting us to this party. We're usually stuck in the basement.

He's just grown like everyone else, and realized 'hey, this is a community to be proud of, and it's okay to not get along all the time, and Stewart still gets annoyed with most characters most days, but he's not the same maniac that he was in season one, that's for sure.

RRX: So much of Letterkenny is just everyone screwing around with each other, it might be hard to imagine that behind the camera is even crazier, but I'll ask: is it crazier? Do you all prank each other hardcore, or is it the absolute pinnacle of professionalism?

TJ: We don't do too much pranking per se, like we're not wrapping Saran-Wrap around peoples' toilets, doing any of that kind of stuff, but we certainly like to make each other laugh. Our pace on set is quick, right? We have big days, lots of dialog. We try not to mess around when there's a moment that needs to be captured; it's like picking and choosing your battles. Will Jacob, the director, throw crazy

Continued on Page 44...



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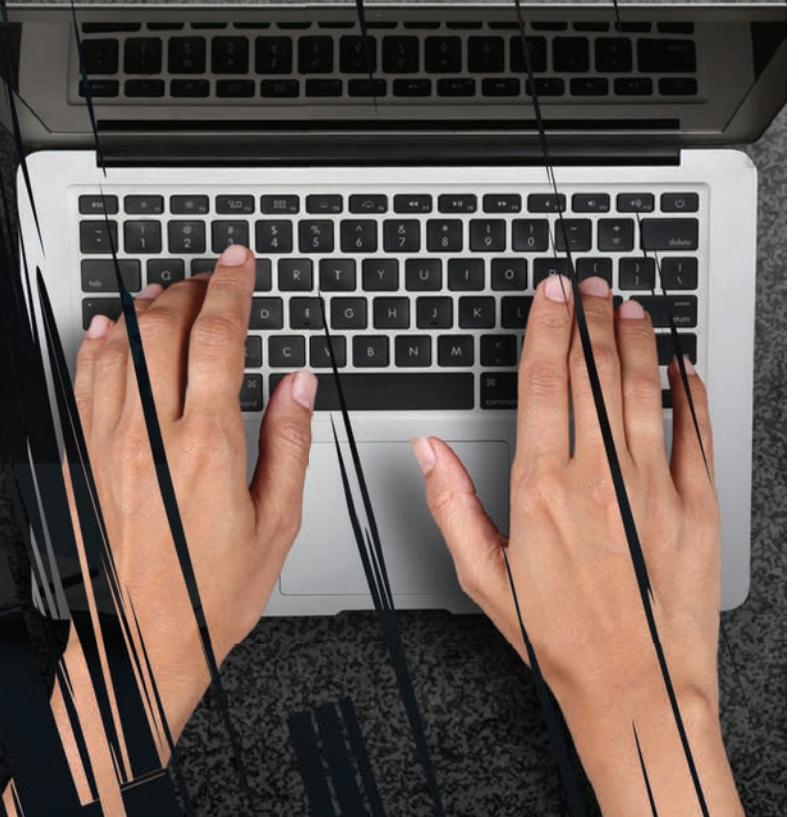
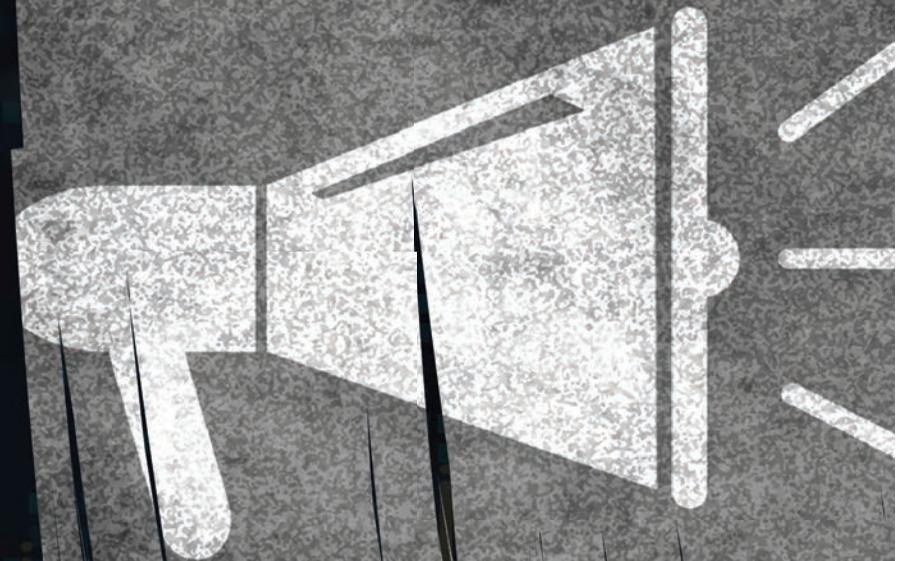
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Deke Dickerson

Sixteen Tons, The Merle Travis Story by Merle Travis & Deke Dickerson



BY ED CONWAY

Merle Travis, Photo provided.

Who is Merle Travis? Unless you are a guitar geek, or an original country music fan, you may not know. He was not just a guitarist, but a man who popularized such a unique style, they named the use of the thumb and index finger to play both bass and melody at the same time “Travis Picking.” A style he learned from his Muhlenberg County Kentucky childhood home. He appeared in “From Here to Eternity” and many other movies. He hung around, and also toured with Gene Autry, Tex Ritter and Johnny Cash. He wrote “Sixteen Tons”, popularized by Tennessee Ernie Ford. He appeared on the old “Hee Haw” program with his old band mate Grandpa Jones. He was a fine cartoonist as well as prolific writer, including later year episodes of “Hee Haw.”

The book is credited to both Merle Travis and Deke Dickerson, and the early chapters are organized with the first part written by Merle and a follow up by

Deke to add details and put things in historical context. This continued until the mid-50s where Merle’s writing had ended. There are a ton of photos documenting much of what is written, including what may very well be the very first design of a solid body electric guitar by Merle, and built by Paul Bigsby (a guitar Leo Fender, yeah that Fender, borrowed just before releasing an electric guitar of his own that later became the Telecaster).

I spoke with one of the biggest guitar geeks I know, Deke Dickerson, who decided it was time to write about this wonderfully talented, as well as, flawed man, so that people could get to know an important cog in American music history. Dickerson has written “The Strat in The Attic” and the “Strat in The Attic 2” about the sometimes random ways people have come across historically significant guitars and too many music related articles to mention here. He is also a

fine musician who has backed up many of the old-time greats at various music festivals around the world.

RRX: When did you start playing guitar?

DD: I originally took guitar lessons when I was seven or eight years old, and I had this horrible teacher who was a very strict classical guitar teacher. I borrowed this classical guitar from a neighbor and this woman was like this classic Nurse Ratchet type where she would scold you for doing this wrong and not holding your hand in this position. I didn't last very long, and I really hated it.

Then when I was about 13, I saw Chuck Berry duck-walking and playing electric guitar, so I asked for an electric guitar for a birthday present and just started teaching myself at that point.

RRX: I guess Chuck was one of your idols. When did you discover Merle Travis? I know with me, it was late in life.

DD: I got into rockabilly, country, blues and doowop when I was pretty young. I was doing a radio show on this public radio station in my hometown of Columbia, Missouri starting around the age of 13. And I got exposed to a lot of stuff and there was a lot of bluegrass in my hometown. So, you'd hear people like Doc Watson talking about Merle Travis. It was a few years later, not until my early 20s that I got a copy of the yellow album, "Merle Travis Guitar". Of course, if you're a guitar player and you hear that album, you're just like oh my god this guy is one of the absolute masters, one of the best that ever lived. I still feel that way about that album.

RRX: Why did you choose to do a book about Merle?

DD: I'm a writer, and a music historian, and I have a ton of books, and I feel like I'm pretty well versed in what's out there and it started bugging me, why isn't there a Merle Travis book. Especially since he was known as being a writer. A guy that probably was one of the smartest and he could really write a story, he could put pen to paper and write a great story. So, it sort of befuddled me that there was no Merle Travis book. His two daughters that are still alive, live out here in Southern California, Merlene and Cindy, and I would meet them at events, like at a Marty Stuart show and once at the Grammy Museum, and just kind of introduced myself and I just kept hammering on them I said look there really needs to be a book. They really wanted there to be a movie and I said, well look, you can't have a movie unless you have a book first and I think I'm the guy

to do it. That eventually led them to take me to the storage unit up where all of Merle's things were and had been there since his last wife [Dorothy] had died. In that was a mind-blowing array of stuff, guitars, stage suits, photographs, letters, memorabilia, reel to reel tapes, just all kinds of stuff and in there was about 80-100 pages of autobiographical writing that he had started on but had never organized. He never finished it. It was just kind of raw writing. So, I took that to Scott Bomar at BMG Books and said look, we discovered this unpublished writing that Merle did, and I really want to do a book and I think between this and the stuff that we discovered it's going to be a really amazing book. So luckily, he agreed and signed me on to do a book with BMG and the whole thing got started.

RRX: It's wonderful that the family trusted you to tell the story.

DD: They're super nice people, I got lucky with Merlene and Cindy because they grew up in Southern California and we're kind of on the same wavelength. It was a real godsend that we liked each other and got along together.

RRX: We know Merle had a lot of problems to go along with the genius, how hard was it to write about the bad, along with the good, knowing the family was going to read it.

DD: The stories are sort of legendary, lots of people would repeat the stories about the drinking and the pills and the shootout with the police that happened in 1956. Those stories I heard repeated as soon as I started hanging out with the older guitar players that knew Merle Travis, like everybody knew those stories. So, when it came time to do the book, luckily, Merlene and Cindy said, "you just have to write the truth, good and bad, there's lots of both and just tell the true story". I think that, especially in 2022, it's a lot different than if I had written it 30 years ago, people just kind of expect a hard-hitting story that tells the truth. It used to be you'd sort of have to dress it up and make it smell like flowers, and nobody really expects you to do that anymore. I think at the end of the day, it's the best book that could have been written about the guy.

RRX: I enjoyed the book but felt sad the hard life shortened his life earlier than it should have.

DD: Yeah, but on the other hand, I always tell people, it's a real testament to how much punishment the human body can take. He lived to be 65 years old. It's like him and Jerry Lee Lewis, those guys should have died in their 30s with all the abuse

they gave their bodies. They both lived to be old men.

RRX: There was an amazing list of interviews you did for your book, and I noticed Thom Bresch (rumored to be Merle's illegitimate son) had passed away this past May, did he get a chance to see the book?

DD: He did not. I spent three days with him in Nashville while I was doing interviews for the book, so we spent a lot of time together and he basically knew what the book was going to be about. One thing that happened, I think, right before the pandemic, was he finally agreed to do a DNA test that proved he was Merle's son, a thing that had been in doubt for decades. It wasn't really in doubt, but he refused to take the test, so everyone wondered why he refused. Everything was sorted out before he got sick and passed away, and he was happy about that. It kind of breaks my heart that he didn't live to see the book come out. I interviewed all of these people in their 90s as well, about a half a dozen of them, and every single one of them passed away before the book came out. When I signed the book contract in 2018, that was immediately who I sourced out was the 90 years old people because you just never know.

RRX: I grew up watching "Hee Haw" but didn't realize I had seen him.

DD: That was difficult to research because he appeared on the show a few times and I think he was a writer on the show right at the very end. But basically, everyone who was involved with the show is dead so there is no documentation, and it was difficult to find out exactly when that happened.

It's a book about a guitar player, but it's also a book about a guy who was very important in American musical history there's lots of entertaining stories about people like Johnny Cash, Gene Autry and so on that will entertain people who don't even have interest in country music or guitar. That's how I tried to write it is that people who had no idea who Merle Travis was, will find it an entertaining book to read.

As of this writing, Merle's daughters were happy with the end result. A script has been written for the production of a stage play and eventually they wish to have a biopic movie produced as well.

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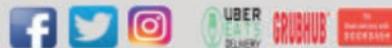
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Brian O'Connell



Bass and Beyond. High Energy Music Jamming Across the Northeast.

BY NIKI KAOS

Brian O'Connell. Photo provided.

I met Brian O'Connell by taking online bass lessons from him and was instantly fascinated with his technical ability and passion for all things music.

Performing bass in two innovative jam bands, Dead Man's Waltz and Arukah, he'll be spending two weekends in a row at the Rustic Barn in February – and will undoubtedly bring a full-on dance party. I find out more.

RRX: You've been touring, playing throughout the Northeast. Where are you focused on playing for Arukah?

BO: With all my musical endeavors, I've always tried to cast a wide net geographically. So that's been New England and the Northeast.

I play with Dead Man's Waltz, (formerly The Steal Your Peach Band), covering the Grateful Dead, The Alman Brothers and The Band. We do the songs our own style, which is high energy and rocking. We play around the Capital District, around Saratoga Springs and the Berkshires. We have a lot of great fans, and we kick ass!

I've been trying to get Arukah into that territory.

People have been asking. We have a good word of mouth buzz all over the Northeast. So, we're playing at The Rustic Barn February 10th. We're trying to get the Deadman's Waltz people out to see Arukah. It's been very exciting.

RRX: That makes sense. When they see your musicianship in Deadman's Waltz, that will likely translate to your other projects. And speaking from experience, I know you're an amazing bass player. You've clearly invested a lot of time and energy studying the instrument, learning how to compose music, and bringing the emotional to the technical side of it. You also make it a lot of fun. The joy of the musicality pours through in everything I've heard you play.

BO: Thank you. That's a great compliment.

RRX: I bring all that up because you have a lot of diverse projects. I saw you mention you shared the stage with members of the Disco Biscuits. When I saw that, I thought I could totally get that vibe from your playing, but then you have other jam band flavors in there too.

BO: I jammed with Brownstein a couple of times. It was a long time ago with my old band Uncle

Sammy. We opened for them two or three times, once at the Natick Center for the Arts where they played their rock opera "Hot Air Balloon".

RRX: Oh nice.

BO: Tons of fun. Festival stuff too. Marc was always such a great guy. And really friendly to us. He even gave me a nickname, Vinnie Chops. But my personal taste with the jam band thing is that I really loved all the San Francisco bands from the 60s. Loved Jefferson Airplane and The Grateful Dead. And I saw Grateful Dead when I was a kid a couple times, but LOVED Phish, absolutely, when I saw them coming out. I saw them in '92. And started seeing them as much as I could.

My tastes range wildly. Especially progressive rock. Jazz fusion. A lot of straight-ahead jazz. A lot of classical. World music.

RRX: I see that! There's a lot of energy. I see the prog and the jazz too. You guys will be playing very technical passes together, where the bass and guitar are working the same thing, but in harmony with each other. At the same time, it is bopping and moving and keeping you grooving. It's a lot of fun.

BO: I'm excited about Arukah because it does have the fusion prog riffs. Dennis is great at writing that stuff. And we have the open improv, which is very high energy and searching and inventive. At times we hit some great, surprising things. I live for that. And I get to take some killer bass solos. Those guys back me up really well. Plus, we have some nice rock/pop moments.

And Dennis, the guitar player, he's fabulous. He's a great singer. He's got a good soul edge and rockin'. And Brian the drummer can sing backups and harmonies very strong too. So, we're trying to focus on that. And we do some intense fusion minor key jams that are funky and fast. That's a strength of ours. I'm trying to get us to do a couple more soul things that feature Dennis.

RRX: A good range.

BO: With the voicing, Dennis kicks ass on both rhythm and lead guitar. And Brian is solid as a rock, plus his singing. So, we have a killer ninja trio. I'm very excited about that.

RRX: We'll be happy to see you out in the Capital Region. I bet the Rustic Barn roof is going to be lifted. Because people at the RB love to dance. It's a perfect combination.

BO: Yeah – we're playing there with Dead Man's Waltz February 4th. And then with Arukah February 10th.

RRX: Very cool! In addition to playing out, you work on original compositions. Tell me your musical that you just re-did? Did you stage a musical?

BO: It's been a couple years now, but I'm a big fan and explorer of colonial era U.S. history. I'm a big history buff. Especially New England, since I live up here. So, I got into the Salem Witch Trials. I'd get into little rabbit holes that I would go down, and my fiancé Rachael said, why don't you write a rock opera about it? And I was like, of course! (laughs)

RRX: Why not?

BO: Why not? I started doing it. 2019, maybe 2018. I started reading tons of books and researching it. I started writing about it. So far it has not been a staged rock opera, like a musical theater piece. But it became a podcast. It's called "Witch Hunt. A History Told in Music, Sound, and Story" It is me narrating the history of the Salem Witch Trial. It's totally historically accurate, as much as I can. There's songs and there's background music and songs with singing. So, it's a combination. I've only gotten four episodes out, and they're about 20 minutes long each. I

encourage you to check it out. It's got a couple of thousands of downloads, so it's just humming away there.

The Salem Witch Trials is a very fascinating period. Very misunderstood. And misrepresented in popular culture with stuff on T.V. and the Crucible that they make everybody read in high school is very inaccurate telling, so I'm trying to tell the real story of it. A fascinating intersection of different things.

RRX: That's awesome.

BO: I would love to do it as a staged show. I've even drawn out how the stage would look. It's a long-term passion project. And I'd love to have one foot in the jam band scene but have another foot in the arts world, get some grant funding and put on some kick-ass shows. I love that. I love Roger Waters, Pink Floyd, Genesis. Theatrical stuff. I love improvising a 20-minute jam, but I also love programmatic things. Stuff that is very detailed.

RRX: That all sounds amazing. Thanks for talking with me! Folks can keep up to date at Arukah (arukahband.com) and <https://stealyourpeach.com/> for Dead Man's Waltz. See you on the dance floor!

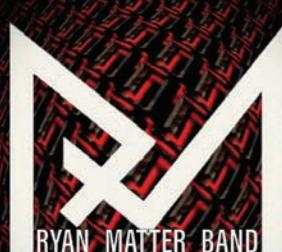
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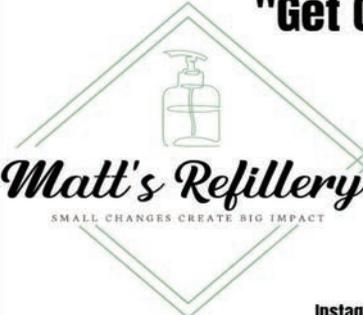
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Ryan Matter

Southern Rock In Upstate New York



BY ROB SMITTIX

Ryan Matter. Photo by Stephanie J Bartik.

RM: What's up brother?

RRX: What's going on?

RM: Choking down a beer before I start playing.

RRX: Excellent! So, what's new and exciting with The Ryan Matter Band?

RM: I literally just booked this about 20 minutes ago. We're going to North Carolina in March, the week before that we're in Florida for three days. Coming home we're trying to pick up something in South Carolina then North Carolina and come home.

RRX: That's amazing man.

RM: I mean it blows my mind how sh*t's working out right now. But just trying to stay busy that's been the big key. Trying to get re-established as a busy band.

RRX: Right, well it looks like you're on track for that. Up here you kind of fall into the category of southern rock but you're going down south, what do they call bands from up north that play this kind of music?

RM: (Laughs) Southern rock.

RRX: It's still southern rock, alright.

RM: It's southern rock with a touch of blues. When people think of ZZ Top, it's dirty Texas blues. With me living in Texas for as long as I did, that's kind of where we found our comfort zone. As a writer, that's where the writing came out. It's kind of like, hey, here we go, this is what we are this is what we do.

RRX: I remember you telling me that you were in Texas for a while. Are you from Texas?

RM: I'm from California. I'm from Los Angeles.

RRX: The first time I was in LA was before the time of GPS and I found my way around easily just by remembering how it looked on TV.

RM: Mmm Hmm, it's not hard to figure out. All of the roads are pretty squared.

RRX: I don't know how I did it. I drove from San Francisco. When I hit LA, I just came down Mulholland Drive, I'm staying on the Sunset Strip and it's right there.

RM: It's crazy because I used to be able to drive all of those f**king roads with my eyes closed.

RRX: Hollywood was like Schenectady in the 80's, but with stars on the sidewalk.

RM: It's gotten worse over time, it used to not be too bad. I mean it was always kind of dumpy but...

RRX: Last time I was there was definitely worse than the first.

RM: My last time there was three and a half to four years ago and it was terrible. I don't think I ever really want to go back.

RRX: And you're from there.

RM: And I'm from there. My dad still lives out there and he's like do you want to come visit? I'm like not really.

RRX: You'd love to see him though I'm sure. So, I'm really glad you are on board to be our first BAND-with segment. Stephanie J Bartik's photography and my conversations with bands and artists, seem to be a great combo. So, I guess I should ask, do you have

any new recording or anything in process?

RM: We're actually working on a new live album right now. We recorded it several months ago, we're in the mixing process right now, getting all of the tracks finalized. We actually just released a live track of "All Over Now," one of the better songs that will be on the album. We dropped it as a single release leading up to the 2023 of the bootleg live album. That's what we're working on right now and from there when we take our mini tour we're going to start working on pre-production and writing some new stuff and figuring out some of the other songs that I still have that we haven't done.

RRX: I'm glad it's a live album. You're a great live band to see and I think that's definitely the way to go. I don't know if you're planning on doing CD, vinyl or MP3's. What's the deal going to be?

RM: We're going to start with digital but we're probably going to end up doing CDs just because I feel strongly enough about the album that we can invest more money into the promo of it.

RRX: It sounds like you're getting the momentum that you need.

RM: We're really starting to pick it up. It's been a nice change of pace. 2022 ended the way it has.

Obviously opening for Mountain. It's the stepping stones right now that are falling into place. I'm very thankful. It's all starting to pick up and go in a direction that it hasn't for a very long time. It's nice to see all of the hard work starting to pay off. If that makes sense?

RRX: Definitely. Last time I saw you and I got to talk with you was at Pauly's Hotel for the Mountain show. First of all, I think that they picked the best opening act, secondly you guys f**king crushed it so much, great stage presence. Your drummer is sick and I love the way that he talks to the audience to bring the crowd into it. But...I would say you guys did not sound like a local band opening up for Mountain, you sounded like the band that should've been on tour with Mountain.

RM: Well, I appreciate it.

RRX: Oh man, you guys f**king ripped it man. I've only see you perform a couple of times but I've always been impressed. I'm sure it'll only get better and for people that haven't seen you before I highly recommend it.

RM: It's been a nice feeling, the reactions that we get when we come out that way and play. The bass player and I live in the Utica area and Dennis is the local guy. We love coming out there. It's always a fun

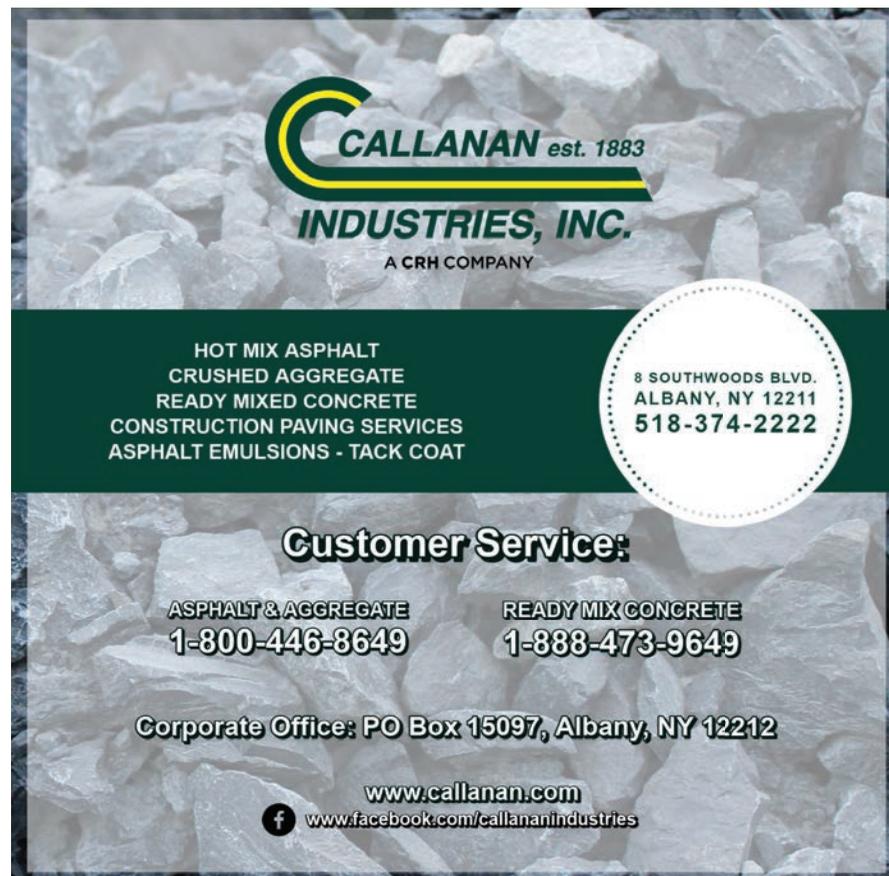
show, no matter where it's at in Albany, in the Capital District. It's a great time, everybody's very open to the original music, which is a nice change of pace. I feel like we're building a strong following out that way, it continues to open up new doors.

RRX: I had to ask this silly question because I always kind of wondered. For a band that puts you front and center as The Ryan Matter Band. How does a band decide we're going to go ahead and use your name as the band?

RM: It started out about 13 years ago and the band actually started out as 2 Lane Blacktop. Between solo shows and band shows, it started to lose name recognition. So, I started to build a following as a solo artist in Texas. When I'd go out with the band, nobody would know who 2 Lane Blacktop was. As things progressed, the two became one because of name recognition so it morphed into The Ryan Matter Band. It wasn't for any other reason.

RRX: That makes sense. I now understand.

The Ryan Matter Band will be playing Xperience FuzeBox Sunday Matinee Series February 19th at 2pm at The Fuze box in Albany.



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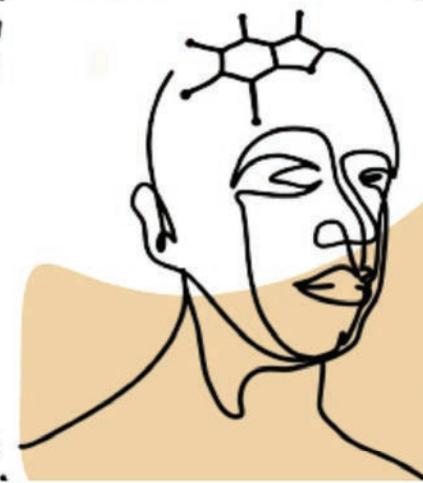
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Doc Horton

*A doctor of
Groove Theory*



BY LIAM SWEENY

Sometimes you just need a six-piece band jamming out “Brick House” by the Commodores and a little James Brown. Sometimes you need that when the boss is playing “Ride of the Valkyries” through his overtime demands and

you’ve just sank into the comfiest seat at the club.

Derek “Doc” Horton and the Jay Street Band are here to give you what you need. And you need to listen to the Doc and get a shot of Motown and an IV of pop/funk and just let the groove anesthe-

Doc Horton. Photo by Miller Media,

tize and hypnotize.

I connect with Doc Horton and we talk about feeling good.

RRX: You aren't calling yourself "Doc" Horton like bluegrass performer "Doc" Watson calls himself Doc. You actually have your doctorate, and you teach at SUNY. It's gotta be a little bit of fun when you're teaching younger people who have music posters in their rooms and may have no idea you play. Can you connect with your students this way?

DH: Actually, I try to keep my worlds separate. Universities in general tend to be overly static and conservative. I have found it best to confine my music to the community. The community is more appreciative of creatives.

RRX: You got your start with this band at Ambition Café on Jay Street in Schenectady, which you've said was kind of an iconic place, and I believe it. There are a lot of places in the area that are almost incubators for bands, and I would mention a few, but for space and not to exclude anybody. So tell us what it is about Ambition that did it for you?

DH: Ambition Cafe has an owner, environment,

and clientele that are open to creatives. They are willing to showcase new talent. I absolutely love that place!!

RRX: You have gone through a lot of members in the past number of years. I watched one interview where you said thirty or forty over the years. It's got to be a strong groove that can keep the band alive when you go through so many musicians. Do you feel that you've learned from the past musicians? Do you think their "ghosts" are still with you?

DH: LOL!! Yes, there have been scores of musicians who have come through my band. However, I'd like to think that "Doc Horton and the Jay Street Band" has boosted many of their careers. I foster a professional, respectful, and nurturing environment. For many young musicians I have provided their first professional experience in music.

RRX: Some bands that play covers, you can take a listen and maybe figure why they don't do originals. But I don't see that with your band. You've probably had the talk at some point about doing originals, and there are pros and cons. It can be rewarding to do originals, but much, much harder to

make money. Are there other considerations?

DH: I am a singer/songwriter/producer/entertainer and I have written songs since childhood. In 2023, I will be dropping some original music. Stay tuned!!

RRX: You were nominated for a 2022 Listen Up award, the first of its name, put out by Radioradiox.com. This was very fan-generated, so someone loves ya'. What can you say about your fans, and what have they meant to you over the years? And would you wish to nominate a band for the next award that comes around?

DH: I can't express enough love for my fans. It is for the fans that I perform. And, I believe that when fans come to one of my performances that they deserve a show!! That's why whether it's 1 or 1000 I give it everything I got! My fans deserve it!!

And, I'd like to nominate the Donna Tritico Band. Donna and Mark Tritico are friends of mine and they have a fantastic band!! I'd love for our two bands to tour together in the future.




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Tyler Johnston cntd.

Continued from Page 23

dialog at me, my coverage, or will someone mess up a line and cause the whole cast to burst into laughter, and not be able to rein it in for a period of time. Some people will improvise moments just to screw over their fellow actors. There's more of those moments, like Mark Forward ("Coach") does that with Andrew (Herr, "Jonesy,") and Dillon (Playfair, "Riley.") Coach will just do that to try to make Andrew and Dillon just burst out in laughter. There are some moments in the series where you'll see maybe Dillon chuckling in the corner or Andrew smiling in the corner because 'that was the best take. The boys were smiling, so be it.' So, it's more of that, more of us trying to make each other laugh.

RRX: You have other work that you do, not just "Letterkenny" and "Supernatural". You were Danny Lubbe in "Less Than Kind". You've actually been in a ton of stuff. Do you feel like throwing some shameless promotion at our viewers? Trust me; they love it.

TJ: Okay, well I'm developing a book right now, so I'll give a couple plugs here. It's a book called "The Last Gang in Town", written by Aaron Chapman, and it's a book set in the 1970s in East Vancouver, and I'm hoping to make that into a TV Series. Very very prelim, but that's what I'm currently working on. I'm going to have a VR short film come out, that Evan and I actually shot together earlier this year, so if any of your readers have a VR set, they will be able to watch a movie that Evan and I did together. I have no idea how it's going to go or how it's going to be. But those are two things people can look out for from me looking forward.



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Jeff Prescott *cntd.*

Continued from Page 5.

your playing style a few years back.

JP: In 2014, I had a nasty fall on some ice and I broke my leg pretty badly. Bad enough to render me right useless for a couple of months. In support of my own sanity, I had to think of it as a journey, something I could come out the other side of better somehow. I had two practice pads, one hard and one soft. I hung out in bed, my busted leg elevated on some pillows, watching funny TV shows, and swinging drumsticks for about eight hours a day, for about two months. I had been a matched grip player from the time I started up until that point. I did take some lessons from Ted MacKenzie in my late teens and had an introduction to movements and exercises in the traditional method. Anyway, once I was able to get back to playing, I stuck with it, and it ultimately took me about three years to make a full-on transition to being a traditional grip player. For me, that meant I was able to get through a four-hour gig playing only traditional grip. It was a lot of pain and dropped sticks, but I do believe it opened my left hand a lot, especially in terms of endurance. But in some ways it inhibited my left hand; it got really difficult to play matched grip at all. So, over the last few years I've been switching between matched and traditional grips. I guess the goal for me is to keep my left hand (the less coordinated of the two) as strong and dexterous as possible. Playing both ways on a normal basis has been the most advantageous for me.

RRX: Tell me about some of your best/favorite gigs.

JP: There have been so many of those. In 2012 I played a show at The Turning Point in Nyack, NY with Rhett Tyler and Early Warning with Al Buonanno on bass. All three cylinders were firing on that one. Rhett was pulling out these covers that we would normally never play and we were just killin' 'em. Standing ovations were commonplace with Rhett but there was something magical about that room and that night.

Playing in Lake Placid or in Saranac with Raisinhead were some of my favorite experiences. The vibe in the North Country is always just a step up! We did a New Year's gig at Zig Zag's and it was like -18 degrees out. I had a beer inside the window and my glass was covered in frost. It seems like when the temperature outside is oppressively cold, the vibe inside gets especially warm.

Rye Bread shows and parties are always an absolute blast. I've played Rye Bread functions of one kind or another with Dead Man's Waltz, Soul Sky, Stratosphere, Raisinhead, The Stone Revival Band, Brian Kane and The Beginning, and the Mike McMann Band, and it's always a great party and great time! I've always loved playing at The Ale House in Troy. It's a bit like going home for me. For a number of years, Mike McMann did birthday shows at the Ale House and he'd pull out all the stops. Soul Sky and the Ale House are always a great match like meat and gravy!

One gig I played with Matt Mirabile at Proctor's Theater was so much fun. The players involved and the sound in that room just made that one really stand out.

RRX: Do you play any other instruments? What would you be doing if you were not playing drums?

JP: My first instrument was the guitar. I came up playing fiddle tunes with my grandfather. We had a lot of fun hangin' and playing music together. I still play the guitar on a somewhat normal basis, almost exclusively at home where

nobody can hear me. Once in a while, I'll come out of the ol' shell but it's rare, I guess. If I wasn't playing the drums I think I'd be playing the bass. I played bass in a band at church for a couple of years and I had a lot of fun with it.

RRX: What do you do for fun when you're not playing music?

JP: I like to ride my quad through the woods and find a good spot to watch the sunset or just a cool spot for a stop and a beer. This for me is a great day off. There's nothing like a machine that goes almost wherever you point it. I guess my favorite part of that, however, is being in the woods. It's reconnecting for the soul to be in the woods.

I also enjoy cooking. Making food is one of our most fundamental connections to our own selves and I like to put a lot into it. When I really get into cooking it's like a two-day affair or more. The sauce must sit overnight and marinate in its own goodness. Meatballs take time and also must marinate in the sauce. It's all about time.

I think fixing broken stuff is fun. I wouldn't say I like the nuisance of being forced to fix something that broke but, in the end, the sense of accomplishment that comes out of fixing a tractor that won't move or mow, or a car window that won't go up or down is fun and always rewarding.

RRX: Tell me a gig "horror" story.

JP: I had this gig in Maine, like seven hours away, at a university, outside. I got there with ample time to be ready for a four PM hit. We were playing under two easy-up canopies, set up side by side and I was set up in the middle, like a drummer normally sets up. So, there is an opening, a split if you will, between the two canopies. And it starts to downpour! At one point the wind took the canopies, which were zip-tied together and blew them over, exposing us to the rain completely. So, some guys came over and tied bricks to the bottoms of the easy-ups and that didn't happen again, but for the remainder of the job, the water was pooling up in the top of each cover and dripping out in large and constant spurts, hitting my cymbals, bouncing off and splashing me directly in the face. I was glad the pay was way more than I would make on a typical gig but what a bummer that was!

RRX: What is something about you that most folks do not know, that would surprise them?

JP: I worked for a local audio-visual company for a number of years as their AutoCAD engineer. I was involved in the lighting, audio and video design of Universal Preservation Hall in Saratoga, The Rep in Albany, The Shed in NYC, and Tanglewood Learning Center.

RRX: Tell me your dream gig, with your dream band.
Steely Dan!

RRX: Who are some of your favorite drummers today?

JP: Keith Carlock, Steve Gadd, Ringo Starr, Ginger Baker, Mitch Mitchell, Todd Sucherman, Vinnie Colaiuta, Phil Selway, Virgil Donati, Danny Carey, Ralph Humphrey, Chester Thompson, Aynsley Dunbar

RRX: Anything else you'd like to say?

I'm fortunate and grateful to have the opportunities I do, playing music with so many people in the Capital District and beyond. I've built great friendships with a large variety of styles of players, and I don't really run out of opportunities to work constantly. I appreciate the people that book the work and ask me to join in more. It's like...the point of my existence hahaha!

Well, we're fortunate, and grateful for you, Jeff!

Six Degrees of Alex Chilton

BY JOHNNY MYSTERY

Or, how to get an alternative band from Minneapolis to write a song with your name as the title, thus procuring your status as a rock icon.

The fickleness of the record buying public is only outdone by its short attention span. People forget. People move on. Art is disposable unless you associate that art with a time in your life that was somewhat monumental. Music is the greatest form of art for evoking a memory. Hearing one line of melody or a catchy chorus can take you back to the sights and smells of another place and time. With that in mind, how could you forget about The Box Tops?

In the fall of 1967, The Box Tops and their vocalist, Alex Chilton took their first record, "The Letter" to number one on the pop charts. Quite the feat for a debut record but even more impressive when you consider Alex and his band were still teenagers. It's even more impressive when you realize that such a mature vocal was coming from a 16-year-old. That is to say, unless you saw them live who would believe such a powerful smoky sound was being made by a skinny white kid! I would venture to say that except for The Young Rascals, the Box Tops were the best blue eyed soul band to come out of the U.S.

The Box Tops had a more than healthy run of hits in the final years of the 60's. Follow up records include "Cry Like a Baby," which included a sitar and keep in mind these are soul records. More Top 40 gems that followed were, "Soul Deep", "Neon Rainbow", and the very clever tribute to street walkers, "Sweet Cream Ladies Forward March." A lot of social consciousness coming from high school boys was happening here.

Years back, I got the chance to talk to the drummer from the final Box Tops tour and he told me about Alex's idea for a new band that would primarily be a four piece that would be strictly rock n roll but with songs that contained introspective lyrics. It wasn't about genres back in those days. It was about ideas. The idea Chilton had would eventually be sighted as the first alternative band and the name of that band would be Big Star. Musicologists from Timbuktu to Portland, Maine will argue all night about who the first alternative band was. Candidates who come to mind would be the likes of The Velvet Underground and The Modern Lovers but as great as those groups are with their own different sound, neither of them had the proper factors that would allow them to assimilate into what we now consider modern alternative to be. At least, not the way Big Star did.

Throughout the 70's, they released three albums worth of material. Chilton's attitude towards record people was moot and their advice on producing a hit fell on deaf ears. Big Star only managed to impress the critics but the music consumers at the time seemed uninterested. Sales were less than stellar, despite songs like, "Thirteen" and "September Girls" the latter of which would go onto be covered by The Bangles.

When Big Star broke up, Chilton spent time soaking up the punk scene in

New York and producing several bands, most notably, The Cramps. He helped them with several of their early records. He also became a fixture later in his hometown of Memphis and later in New Orleans, recording, producing and performing but nearly forgotten. Around 1988 however, alternative gods, The Replacements wrote and released their tribute song "Alex Chilton" and just like that, he was back on the radar.

For the rest of his life, Alex enjoyed a resurgence in his career and participated in reunions of both The Box Tops and Big Star. He also continued to travel, write and record solo projects till his death in New Orleans on March 17th, 2010. By following his own musical ideas his contributions to rock and roll have been tremendous.

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