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March 2023
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VINNY DAWSON

The “Gene Simmons” of tribute band KISStory talks music history - theirs and his.

3

SPENCER SHERRY

Magic begets movie magic as local filmmaker sets his sights on Cohoes Music Hall.

22

DENISE PARENT

Thirty years in “The Deadbeats,” a new album out, and a take on covers versus originals.

26

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Vinny Dawson

BY ROB SMITTIX *KISStory's God of Thunder roars*

Stephanie J. Bartik
nyROCKSTARphotographer

Vinny Dawson. Photo by Stephanie J. Bartik.

RRX: You are quite the entertainer from what I can tell.

VD: Oh, thanks.

RRX: Obviously, you're in KISStory but are you in any other bands because I don't think I'd recognize you.

VD: I did an ACDC tribute called High Voltage a while back.

RRX: I remember that.

VD: It was with Mike McMullen and JJ Savage was playing Angus (Young).

RRX: Oh, cool JJ Savage was

actually our second feature with Stephanie J. Bartik's and my Xperience BANDwith thing.

VD: Oh, no kidding, he played Angus for me in 2014-2015, he did like a couple years.

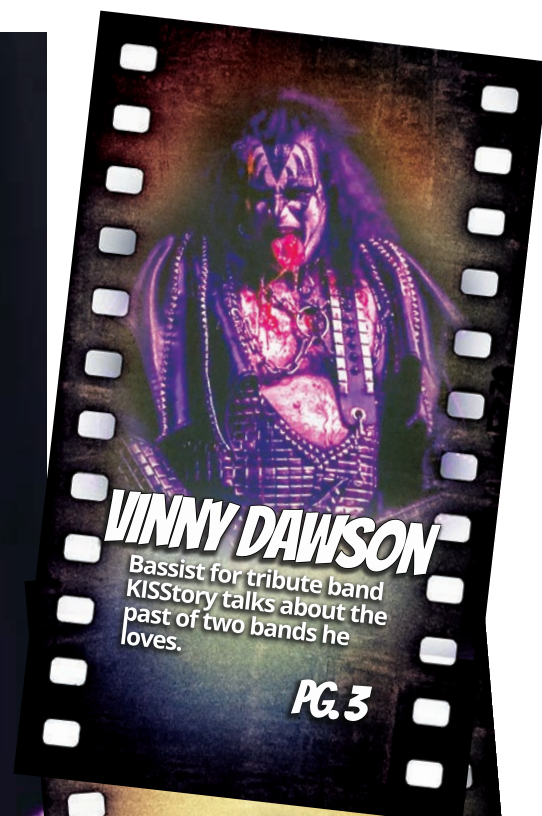
RRX: That's pretty badass. One thing I've noticed with tribute bands is that you have a good sellable product. Unlike me for example that isn't in it for the money and I do almost all original material.

VD: I have four or five roadies and I

don't make nothing. After paying roadies off, rentals of the U-Haul and to keep up the costumes. Like I just spent another \$4,000 on new costumes.

RRX: You look like the legit Gene Simmons man. If I'm not mistaken, I think a while back I saw on social media that you've actually been mistaken for the real Gene Simmons online before.

VD: Yeah, there's a couple of pictures where they had me as Gene Simmons



VINNY DAWSON

Bassist for tribute band KISStory talks about the past of two bands he loves.

PG. 3



SPENCER SHERRY

Filmmaker brings his love of magic to the silver screen in the Cohoes Music Hall.

PG. 22



DENISE PARENT

Three decades in "the Deadbeats" has offered a lifetime of memories and a unique perspective.

PG. 26



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CONTENTS

- 3** ♡ **VINNY DAWSON** KISSTORY BASSIST
- 10** ♡ **MATT NIEDBALSKI** LOCAL DRUMMER EXTRAORDINAIRE
- 16** ♡ **JOE PROMPTER** CYBERNETIC ART THEIR
- 22** ♡ **SPENCER SHERRY** MAGIC FILMMAKER
- 26** ♡ **DENISE PARENT** DEADBEATS DRUMMER
- 32** ♡ **JORDAN LANEGAN** THE CRAWL
- 38** ♡ **JOHNNY MYSTERY** MUTE BUTTON STUCK IN ON POSITION
- 46** ♡ **JEFF SPAULDING** OBSERVATIONS AND RAMBLINGS

Continued from Page 3

(Both Laugh)

RRX: That's cool though it means you're doing it right.

VD: The only difference between Gene and me is that my nose is smaller.

RRX: Really hard to tell with the make-up.

VD: With no make-up people say I look like Blackie Lawless. You won't find too many pictures of me without make-up.

RRX: No not at all.

VD: Unless we're doing Revenge and we dress like 84' KISS.

RRX: I was going to ask about this, so you guys do rotate some of the KISS members?

VD: Yeah, KISStory has always been like that. It's been going since 96' and its always kind of been hired guns that I would hire because I wanted to do shows and so them right; so I would always hire top-notch guys.

RRX: Makes sense.

VD: I had a couple of guys come in that were horrible (laughs). They said this one guy does Ace Frehley really good and I seen a couple of his tapes but he didn't mention it was years ago. We just had

that happen at The Strand, my regular Ace (Pat Pasquale) had a wedding to go to and we couldn't move the date. Our Paul Stanley said my old Ace Frehley from like ten years ago will do it. He gets to the show I ask when was the last show you did? He said about two years ago. I was like oh no. Me and the Paul literally had to carry that show. HE was like Ace if you saw him when he was drunk.

(Both Laugh)

RRX: Wow, right? I just saw a video for the first time yesterday of Ace Frehley being interviewed and it was hilarious because he thought he had a Grammy for "Beth" all of these years but he didn't and the interviewer corrected him. Did you see that?

VD: (Laughs) No that's awesome!

RRX: Ace didn't believe that he did not have the Grammy, so during the interview Ace gets his wife on the phone and has her text him a photo back of the award he thought was a Grammy. Just classic!

VD: It was a People's Choice Award.

RRX: But "Beth" is a great song and it stands apart from most of KISS's catalog.

VD: Well, thank god for Bob Ezrin who pretty much wrote it. Peter (Criss) brought it to the table with the name Beck. They said, "well we're not going

to call it Beck, we've got to change it". So they changed it to "Beth" but he really didn't write that one.

RRX: No kidding. Peter seems to get a lot of credit for it.

VD: We found out when Peter did his solo album that Peter can't write.

(Both Laugh)

RRX: Well unlike Peter, Ace Frehley and Vinnie Vincent had some good solo albums.

VD: My favorite KISS album is always "Rock and Roll Over" but my second favorite is "Creatures of the Night". That's an album with guest guitarists, Vinnie Vincent only played a few tracks on that album. Bryan Adams wrote "Rock and Roll Hell", "I Love it Loud" and "War Machine".

RRX: I never knew that. Wow!

VD: He also sings on the album doing back-ups.

RRX: How cool is that?

VD: Gene's another one who wasn't a great writer either. The best writer in the band was always Paul. Gene was always better on songs that people wrote for him.

RRX: I've never seen KISS live or KISStory for

Continued on Page 28..



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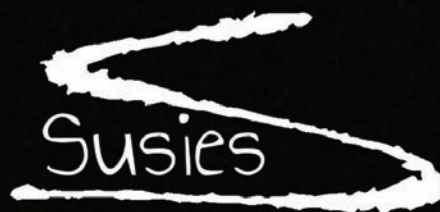


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Matt Niedbalski

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Matt Niedbalski,
Photo by
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BY OP CALLAGHAN

I've been hearing about Matt Niedbalski for nearly 30 years. From the day he was born, it seems that he was destined to become a great drummer. I've been fortunate to hear all about his accomplishments and achievements, including his earliest lessons, gigs, even equipment from his uncle. You see, Matt is no ordinary drummer. His musical tutelage began with his uncle; The Drummer of Love, Mr. Gene Sennes. Gene and I have been friends, bandmates and fellow percussionists for years, and one of his favorite topics of conversation is his nephew, Matt Niedbalski.

My first real conversation with Matt took place at Parkway Music, where I was scheduled to interview another drummer, who couldn't make it. Fortunately, I spent a couple of hours talking drums, jazz, and life with Matt. I found Matt to be a very engaging, knowledgeable, humble individual, with a very "old

soul" vibe. I was impressed with his humility, and lack of ego. He is very complimentary of other local players and quick to give credit to his colleagues, teachers and friends. Matt's playing is both relaxed and restrained; with an easy going, smooth use of poly rhythms, and exceptional dynamics. He's a phenomenal player, and a terrific human being. Gene Sennes told me, "He's my favorite drummer. He is technically sound, plays with great feel, has great time and an excellent sense of dynamics and color. The kid is world class, man!" So please welcome, Matt Niedbalski!

RRX: How old were you when you started playing drums? How did you get started?

MN: I got my first kit when I was two years old. I saw my uncle Gene playing drums as a toddler (either with the Royals, or Rabb for context. I know you remember!) and thought it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen and wanted to do that. It started with beating up on random objects around my grandmother's house with a pair of sticks he gave me and after I started putting dents in the end table my uncle and grandmother realized I had the bug and got me a junior CB drum-kit which I believe the family still possesses to this day. I know they say you don't start forming memories until later than two but I still see them pulling the sheet off the kit. I started taking formal lessons at age eight with Ted Mackenzie.

RRX: Who were some of your influences early on?

MN: My grandmother had a cassette of the compilation "Past Masters Vol 2" by the Beatles and the first track on that is "Day Tripper". Ringo was definitely my first drumming influence, followed by Joey Kramer in Aerosmith and then John Bonham. After getting involved in drum lessons and being introduced to jazz Elvin Jones made me start to focus on what I actually wanted out of the drums.

RRX: What are some of your earliest gigging experiences?

MN: I got involved in this small jazz group of older students when I was around 13 and we had a coffee shop gig every Sunday at this spot called Virgil's Coffee House in Saratoga, which is now the hardest place to get a beer in town, Henry Street Taproom.

Around the same time or slightly after I started sitting in with guitarist Tony Jenkins who was based around the Glens Falls area and had a Friday night gig at Wallabee's Jazz Bar which is now the Bourbon Room. He'd have me sit in with the band and my parents would have to sit at the bar to make sure I didn't drink or smoke and eventually I got the gig with him.

RRX: Who are some of your influences now?

MN: I still listen to my earlier influences and drummers I started checking out in college so from a jazz perspective it's the ones everyone always lists in an interview situation to make sure they're viewed as a credible jazz drummer...so Elvin, Philly Joe Jones, Papa Jo Jones, Billy Higgins, Art Blakey, Max Roach etc. But I really gravitated towards two drummers specifically during my time at college. I went to school at William Paterson University which has a great jazz program and is located about 40 minutes outside of NYC. I would go to the city and check out drummers, but my two favorites were Eric McPherson and Nasheet Waits. Oddly enough they were best friends growing up in Greenwich Village and Nasheet's dad is the legendary jazz drummer Freddie Waits. I saw them and quite literally went, "Oh shit!!" I ended up hanging out with them after gigs, pestering them with questions and took a lesson with Nasheet. I still keep in touch with him. They are both super gracious and all about music. I'm known as a jazz drummer by most people, but my first love is rock and I fucking LOVE Soundgarden and Matt Cameron is a huge idol of mine. And he has a great first name. Finally, Bill Goodwin was a professor of mine at WPU, and happens to be a legend in his own right but also is like an uncle to me. One of the coolest people ever, a great record producer and all around amazing human being.

RRX: Tell me about your first kit.

MN: After the CB kit I mentioned, my first full size kit was a Pacific 5pc. Kit, the cheaper DW because Uncle Gene is a DW guy. He snuck into my parents' basement on my 8th birthday and set it up, complete with your classic Sabian B8's.

RRX: How about your current set-up?

MN: I feel like there are two kinds of drummers, and I further confirmed this working at Parkway.

There's the drummers that have 18 kits and a few cymbals or the drummer that has one or two kits and a million cymbals. I'm the latter. I switch between a Yamaha Maple Custom absolute kit in bop sizes that my parents got me as a graduation present and a 1967 Rogers Holiday kit in black onyx. That one is 12 14 20 so I can either tune that kick up higher and wide open for a more "jazz" sound or throw a super kick II or some muffling in it to get a more punchy rock sound. Some bigger drums are in my future... My go to snare as of late is a Pearl Masterworks Mahogany drum which is 6.5x14. Very warm and has a lot of depth but can bark if you need it to. When I used a metal snare it's a 1960s Ludwig Supraphonic Ted Mackenzie gave me which he took all the chrome off of because it was flaking off and cutting his hands. My setup for cymbals is changing at the moment. I was playing a 1960s 20" Zildjian A with 3 rivets given to me by Bill Goodwin and a 15" 60s A Crash that once belonged to Sarge Blotto. It had a bunch of cracks in it that I drilled holes in so they didn't get worse. That cymbal has a lot of vibe. As for hats 1960s pre serial Paiste 602s. I recently just signed an endorsement deal with Bosphorus after playing a few models of cymbals recently. I really dug them.. I

liked them since they are still handmade. Some of the modern cymbals I've played in recent years felt very stiff to me which is why I always would go back to my vintage Zildjians. The Bosphorus stuff plays pretty soft and you can really dig into them. I have a fear of those cymbals cracking, and the guys at Bosphorus did an incredible job capturing the vibe of my old cymbals and modernizing them. I currently play s 20" Bosphorus 20th Anniversary ride with 2 rivets, 18" Bosphorus 1600 crash and 14" Master Series Hi Hats. I currently endorse Vater drumsticks.

RRX: Do you play any other instruments?

MN: I do, my father plays guitar and I wanted to learn when I saw him playing with his buddies on the weekend so he gave me a book of chords around age 12. Around 14 I bought a bass and in college I had to take piano lessons as part of the general curriculum. When I'm not practicing drums or working on a mix (I also do some recording engineering) I'm usually making demos for fun in my home studio to shed recording and or just playing the guitar. I use the piano as a compositional tool for some of the jazz projects I'm involved in.

RRX: Tell me about your current projects.

MN: I currently play with Charles Cornell. I've

been playing trio with him and Steven Kirsty since we were in high school, and I love them like brothers. Charles has been developing a successful YouTube page in the last few years and lives in Colorado. Steve and I jump on a plane and fly out that way to record and film for his channel so that will be a big focus of 2023. I co-lead a trio with Tyler Giroux and Dylan Perrillo called GNP, a rather clever acronym, yes? We released an album called "Codes" on a small label called Ears & Eyes and are currently working on a follow up album. I've been playing with my friend Rob Fleming for his project Rhoseway, which features his great original music. Other than that, freelancing with various musicians usually playing jazz.

RRX: Now for some fun; tell us about your dream kit, dream gig, and who is in your dream band?

MN: Either Elvin Jones's 70s Yellow Stop Sign Gretsch kit or the Bonham Green Sparkle Ludwigs.

Dream gig is being in the touring band for Chris Cornell's Euphoria Morning tour. That first solo album is pure gold.

Dream band for rock, definitely Chris Cornell on

Continued on Page 39..



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Screw Midjourney

AI Art and the theft of technique



BY LIAM SWEENEY (MAYBE)

Rick James eating a pizza in a taxicab. True artist unknown and unpaid.

I suck at writing articles. If any truth ever came from these keys on this keyboard, it is that. I'm awful. They always come out like essays. I even took a journalism course in college. But I took a lot of things in college, so I don't remember it. So if you'll indulge me, maybe we'll just follow this as an essay. I promise it will be fun. Promise.

ChatGPT is a natural language processor powered by artificial intelligence (AI) developed by OpenAI. It's basically a chatbot; a very, very advanced chatbot. In fact, it can write articles, essays, stories – it can even pass the test to get into Wharton Business School. But it can't write a paragraph like the

one above. Not yet. Hopefully not ever.

One thing that was a given in the rush to replace humans with programs and machines was that it would free us to pursue things like the arts and recreation. But only the last one – recreation – is free of the threat of being consumed by robotics and AI, of course, if you have a job and can afford it.

But a chat-bot is no lone villain here, just a head of the hydra. One very important, disturbing, and controversial head is the small slew of AI art programs, like DALL-E, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion, where people who call themselves “prompters” punch a few keywords into a prompt, and AI makes a

piece of art for them based on those keywords.

In fact, the AI art programs are a better illustration of the villainy of all this. In these programs, the AI goes through the internet and “trains itself” on artwork, breaking down artists' techniques into algorithms that can then be applied to anything. Want to see an apple in the style of Van Gogh? Easy. A day at the DMV by Hieronymus Bosch? No sweat.

A taxicab in the style of Jenny Saunders from Albany, NY? Easy-peasy.

Was Jenny told her technique would be copied and used to train the AI programs? Did they need her consent? Was she compensated? All ‘no.’

Now, I'm bouncing around, because an AI wouldn't do this. You're welcome. Some people, "prompters" who benefit from calling themselves artists, will say that real artists copy techniques from other artists without their knowledge, consent, and compensation. And if someone commissions them to paint an apple in the style of Van Gogh, doesn't that make them the equivalent of Midjourney?

And here is the nut of it all. Yes, artists train in the same way the AI does. In fact, that's why the AI trains that way – the programmers copied the artists' training techniques when they designed these AIs. But, now getting right to the core of the nut; DALL-E, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, and anything like it are not human. To misquote Browning, their reach doesn't exceed their grasp. They are not sentient. They aren't trying to commit to paper one shard of a magnificent, unrealized whole. We create art from the heart. We are driven by passion and emotion and ambition. AI is not human. It is a machine that steals from artists so that people who have no interest in taking an artist's journey and following that vocation can pretend they did.

So what's the harm?

There are people, many people, who will always

go to an artist over buying AI-generated art, assuming they're not tricked. Just like there are people who will always shop at local businesses instead of Walmart and Amazon. But let's be real and face the fact that Walmart and Amazon are huge and local business struggle to stay above the water line. Businesses buy commercial art and hire graphic designers because they have to, not out of any sense of justice or the public good. They hire writers to write sales copy because they have to. It's an expense of doing business; what business isn't desperate to cut expenses?

Is there an end? Probably not good. If artists can't find work, they stop doing art. Mama gotta eat and there's a data entry job somewhere (for now.) So people stop doing art. Or maybe they just stop putting it online. Because AI has to continually train, or its images start looking alike, maybe it loses popularity.

The coopting of creativity by AI is not an evil robot issue, no Skynet, no John Connor. In fact, there are situations where more limited AI can help artists save time with laborious tasks. But apps like Midjourney and Stable Diffusion are tools for thieves. They're ways to devalue people who have a necessary role in society. It's the use of white noise to dilute and

silence voices, done by, at times, well-meaning "prompters."

AI will eventually create in a way that is indistinguishable from humans. And it may create in a way beyond that that is unintelligible to us. So we have to transition from how we create to why we create to understand our role as unique critters on the food-chain. And in this view there may be something for the prompters, but if they feel they are artists in their own way, they too will be replaced in exactly the same way they are helping to replace artists. Their experience in developing just the right key words is being copied and utilized by Joe Snot-rag who's grabbing cheat codes to make a Dali version of Rick James on a unicorn, for no other reason than that he can.

From an artist and a writer, please don't use advanced chatbots to write copy. Don't use AI art programs to design anything. Ask yourself what it would mean when every job was replaced, every trail hiked, every river kayaked a thousand times. What eventually becomes the point of human life if not to create something valued by the world? Do we let an algorithm do that for us too?



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Spencer Sherry

BY LIAM SWEENEY

*Local Filmmaker
bringing magic to
the Cohoes
Music Hall*

Movies and magic are twins separated at birth, coming close once in a while when an explosive display of flowers and playing cards strolls through a plotline under bright lights and a rolling video track. But, as said, twins. Both movies and magic prepare two realities, only one of which is real. And when movie crews come to town, you never know which reality your corner store is going to belong in when “action” gets called.

Spencer Sherry creates movie magic, and he’s coming to Cohoes to create some here. With some unique fundraising and a very special guest, Spindle City is in for something mystical.

I reached out to Spencer and we talk smoke and mirrors.

RRX: You are currently producing a project, a film called “Anomaly” a film centered around magicians. I figure that’s got to be interesting because in both magic and film, not all is what it appears. Can you give us a taste of what it’s about? Who does it star? And is it filmed all over, or mostly locally?

SS: The trick to both is keeping your secrets under wraps! So all I’ll say about the plot is that it centers on a famous magician who features a truly inexplicable illusion in his final run of performances. A disillusioned government agent sees the act, and becomes hell bent on uncovering its method. The magician will in fact be played by real-life illusionist Eric Mead (who the character is based on). Local theater actor, educator, and director John Romeo has been cast as the agent, Ted. The entire script takes place in an old theater and its dressing room, so the film will solely be shot at the Cohoes Music Hall for three days in March.

RRX: Anomaly has attracted the interest of Eric Mead, a famous magician, who was impressed enough to lend his talents to it. Did you seek him out through social media or his website, or did you meet him somewhere and got to talking and it happened? Was the connection, however it happened, a “meet your heroes” situation?

SS: The writer/director, Rahn, was one of my closest friends growing up, and in the last few years we’ve both taken a deep dive into “Penn and Teller’s Fool Us”, where magicians from all over the world try to perform an illusion that stumps the duo. We first saw Eric on that show, successfully fooling them with a beautifully simple trick that truly feels like seeing real magic. When Rahn wrote this story, in which that particular feeling is a theme, he wrote the magician role based off of Eric and his performing style. Confident, but modest. Impish, but innocent. When he finished the script, he went on Eric’s website and sent it to the email address he found there, informing him that there was a character in it inspired by him and his philosophy. Much to our surprise, he responded with an extremely generous offer to play the part if we thought he was right for it. (We did.) Even though most of our conversations have been about logistics and character, it’s still a bit unbelievable to hear his voice on the phone, so yes, I’d say we’ve yet to shake the star-struck butterflies.

RRX: You’re shooting this film at Cohoes Music Hall. It’s a truly beautiful and historic building. Of course, unless you’re doing a documentary, it’s going to be something else. Can you give us a description of what the hall is in the movie,



Spencer Sherry. WMHT Media.

what it’s called, where it is? Does it have a special meaning in the film?

SS: I had heard the Music Hall referenced a few times when performer friends of mine would talk about theaters in the region, but I’d never been in until I went to see a production of “The Flick” that ran there last year. It was immediately apparent that it was the perfect place to tell this story. It’s colorful victorian design and intimate size work so well visually and logistically. We’re also very aware of its rich history and what it means to this area, which is why we’re really grateful they’re opening their doors to us. We’re Capital Region artists; we want to feature things specific to the 518 in our work. We’ll be keeping the name in the film if they allow us to.

RRX: There is going to be a fun fundraiser to not only raise money and give the public a chance to participate. You're giving ordinary people a chance to become extras as audience members. We cater to the public, and our public wants to know: how do our readers get in on this?

SS: They'll be both real and fake audience members at the same time! Eric will be in character as The Great Van Alden on stage acting to the audience one minute, and the next- a different magician or comedian will take the stage and entertain while we set up for the next shot. It's being on a movie set, watching it get made all around you, seeing professional entertainers perform, and supporting local film, all in one show. We want people to have an opportunity to really be a part of this project and engage in a new and meaningful way to the film community. Tickets are going on sale on the Cohoes Music Hall's website.

RRX: You have a Stephen King movie in post-production. How did that come to be? Did Stephen play any role in the film, even behind the scenes? And was there anything to filming a Stephen King film, or a film based off a book by any author, that was different than other projects?

SS: Not unlike Anomaly's origin story, "The Monkey" opportunity was born of several hail-mary phone calls and emails. King lets some of his short stories go to young filmmakers for non-commercial contracts, but I persistently asked for a previously off-limits story as long as I kept the project non-commercial. His agent acquiesced, and I was off to the races. Stephen King and I have had no contact throughout production, and I'm not sure if he's followed anything I've done with it since presumably okaying my plea. Maybe that will change when the trailer is released this month. As far as adapting an existing work, the difference that I'm feeling the most is the expectation of an active and thriving fan-base.

Stephen King may know nothing about this film, but I know for a fact many of his fans do, and I really just hope they appreciate what I've done with the story.

RRX: Filming a movie is expensive. Everyone thinks of actor salaries, but that's only one part. There are crews and people supporting the crews, transportation, catering, on and on. What is the greatest money challenge so far? Are there any "angels" in the capital region that are unsung, or unrecognized?

SS: The thing about producing something independent is that there's a massive sliding scale when it comes to what it could cost, and that's almost exclusively due to what the crew and cast are paid. We're all artists making art, and sometimes we're ok accepting less than our work is worth if we like the project. My goal when I'm fundraising for these films is to not ask people to make those concessions. Which is why even though this hybrid show/film shoot is by far the most ambitious event I've ever put together (and the pressure associated with it will age me at least ten years), it's the only event that has the potential to properly compensate local industry professionals. That's the biggest budget challenge: raising enough to pay people, and then to keep raising until you can pay them right. Not to say there aren't definitely some financial angels floating around the 518 that have been remarkably generous to recent films, but the collaborators that have been donating their time and talent to make sure movies keep being made here also deserve their wings.

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

SS: If you're reading this thinking you're not a magic fan, go look up Eric Mead's Fool Us clip on Youtube. You may just be amazed.



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Denise Parent

Deadbeats Drummer Jams Out with "The Songs in My Heart"



BY NIKI KAOS

Denise Parent. Photo provided.

A member of both The Deadbeats and Brown Eyed Women, Denise Parent is well noted for her rock-solid dance-inspiring drumming, bringing the Grateful Dead songbook to audiences near and far. Exceptional band members also brought the opportunity to showcase original songs for the dedicated following. If you grew up in the

Capital Region music scene, you likely know about the quality experience offered at every show.

With more in her toolbox than drums, solo album, "The Songs in My Heart", incorporates rhythmic songwriting with percussive skill. I caught up with Denise while she creates an extra special laminate gift for the fans who will be at an upcoming show to learn more about her life as a musician and her latest release.

DP: The Deadbeats, it's my 30th year.

RRX: Is it really?

DP: Yeah. It's pretty incredible what we do. What we had, and what we built. And I'm still overwhelmingly pleased when people show up to the shows. They still keep coming. Last year we won The Listen Up award for Favorite Grateful Dead band. That says a lot. It's been heartwarming to build a community and have friends and fans. I still count my blessings and I'm very grateful for the opportunity to play for people.

RRX: It is heartwarming for me to hear. When I was in my early college years, in the 90s, I remember seeing you on Wednesdays at Valentine's. You were a role model for me, because you were holding it down. You were a woman musician, but you were just part of the crew. And The Deadbeats created a special vibe for people. As we know, there are now about a million Dead cover bands. But my memories are filled with the sweet nostalgia of those Wednesday nights.

DP: There's this whole thing about our family. Extended family. People that used to come out every once in a while. And those who come out all the time. And I am extremely grateful, and I use that word knowing exactly what I am saying. I do not take this for granted. And I'm just so fortunate because I love this freakin' music! I just love it!

I've had a good year in 2021. I released my first solo CD. Some songs I've been playing with The Deadbeats for 30 years are on that CD. I never really got a live recording from Valentine's but, talk about worlds colliding. I was playing at Brooklyn Bowl with Brown Eyed Women. It was a great show. And I get to the end of that show. And a fan that I had met

from Brown Eyed Women hands me a tape and says, this is for you. This is The Deadbeats from 1996 in Valentine's. And sure enough. My original songs are on there!

RRX: That's so cool!

I want to ask you about being in the music scene. People have questions about the survival of local music. You seem to be satisfied with how you've done it. Is there something you would say that helped you resolve the difference between being in cover bands versus your original project? What is your secret to not only surviving, but thriving, within the music community?

DP: The Deadbeats have blessed me with many originals. In the days of old, we had Alex in the band. And he wrote a lot of original music. But I was always writing, so we had our music in there for three decades now. And people came out and requested those songs. So that allowed for an easy crossover, because we were doing it for people who liked it.

I knew I loved to play original songs, but those gigs are not going to be as profitable, monetarily. And you really gotta get people in the door. Whereas the Grateful Dead does that all by themselves.

I can remember growing up learning the Zen Tricksters on Long Island. And the Zen Tricksters, still to this day, are my favorite band. They have a great scene. But there would be some people who would yell out "Play a Dead song" after they played an original.

Now I'd be sweaty, all out of breath, raging on the dance floor to their originals, because I love the band. But there are people who just want to hear the Dead. They don't want the other thing. So, you find a fan base that allows you to do both and stick with it. The Zen Tricksters did have a fan base that allowed for that.

I'm very fortunate to have seen that there is a power in the crossover. And there are bands who can play their own songs, and that gave me the encouragement to go out there and do it.

RRX: Let's talk about your album "The Songs in My Heart". I would say the first song, "Shangri La" sets the theme for what you put together. And the

lyrics and music throughout the album reflect that blissful place. That place of gratitude that you mentioned.

DP: Well, there is a real inspiration for “Shangri La”, and I’ll tell you if you want.

RRX: Please do!

DP: It’s written about a family trip when I was about one year old to this place in the Catskills called Shangri La. It was a restaurant. I do believe it was the summer that Woodstock was going on, so I’m dating myself now.

My parents and two of my older siblings, my brother, sister and I went up there. Let’s just say... maybe about nine months later, my younger sister was born. But... (laughs)

So, I wrote that song for my family, kind of about that trip. I talk about mommy and daddy, and then my older sisters in the first verse. And then my older brothers in the second verse. And then there’s me. And then there’s my younger sisters in the last verse.

There’s a story there about my family. And a little bit of a funny thing about planting seeds to grow and the little double entendre you can have there. But that’s really what that’s about. I love writing about my family because I feel very fortunate to have

grown up in such a loving household. I don’t let that go without being said and repeated, as many times as I can.

RRX: I think that’s what I was connecting to. That love. But via my experience with your other family, through your music. I love learning that this song was about your born family, but for me, as someone who is not blood related to you – I felt like I was part of a family listening to that song.

DP: Oh cool! I love that!

RRX: It was really comforting, and I wanted to hang out. Grab a plate of food and hang out with you all on your vacation.

DP: That sounds like a great place. I think we should bring back Shangri La. I don’t think it’s there anymore, but you know, it could be a place for people who are on their way somewhere. They could come in and get a hot meal, and a friendly conversation.

RRX: We’re on to something there!

I especially liked your lyrics throughout the album. For example, “Happy Love Song”. It’s a little tongue in cheek, maybe, but upbeat? Fun and flirty. Was that what you were thinking when you wrote that song?

DP: Right on! Completely. It’s all tongue and

cheek. It was two truths and a lie kind of thing.

RRX: We can do that to ourselves. Two truths and a lie we tell ourselves, and then when we look back at it...I have this thing about interpreting music lyrics for my own emotional needs, which I think many people do as listeners.

DP: We all do that. I think that’s why people don’t want to say what the song is written about, because so many people have their own opinions of what it might mean to them, but I’m open either way. But I do understand that mystery and let them have their own meaning. But I wrote Shangri La for my family, and I’m happy to say that. Because I love my family. So I’m a happy camper in that regard. I’m going to give thanks.

RRX: Your video for the song “Get Over It” is so much fun! People should check it out on YouTube under Morning Sun Smiles.

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. You have an amazing March lined up, including the Dark Star Orchestra after-party at Parish Public House in Albany on March 10th. People can keep updated at deadbeatsny.com, browneyedwomen.com and mistymountainramblers.com.



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Continued from Page 5.

that matter. At this point in time, KISS is on another farewell tour, is this really going to be it?

VD: Yeah, this is it.

RRX: They've done several farewell tours, if I'm not mistaken.

VD: Well, I still have a shirt from 2000 that says farewell tour on it. If you ask them, they'll tell you that was the end of Ace and Peter.

RRX: Right? So, 23 years later, it's probably going to be about that time.

VD: At their age I'm still shocked that they can do it. Last time I saw them was in 2019 and everything was slow and melodic. I was like eh.

RRX: Now being in such an elaborate tribute band do you have to get certain permissions or pay royalties. How does that work?

VD: I know Gene thinks that tribute bands are just a self-promotion for him.

RRX: Well, that's good, probably one of the most agreeable things I've heard him say.

(Both Laugh)

VD: They never gave us any sh*t and we've been doing it over 25 years. I'm 53 and there aren't any 30-year-olds doing KISS tribute bands. There are so many KISS tribute bands out there and I'm the worst critic for all of them. Some guys look good, but they can't sing and they can't play. Some guys can play but they can't sing.

RRX: You don't get the whole package.

VD: What I find now are a lot of musicians are trying to jump on the tribute band wagon, which is funny to me because back in the 90's all I heard was why don't you do your own stuff? Why don't you have your own originals? Because nobody wants to hear my sh*t!

RRX: I got you on that man. You said in the beginning you don't really make that much money because you've got so much overhead but your product could sell. Personally, I've never written a song for the audience I write music for me and if people like it, that's cool.

VD: Right and I have those too from myself but I'm not going to fill up the place with that sh*t. You've got to be part attention whore to do what I do. I love the crowd, I love acting.

KISSTORY will be performing Friday, April 7, 2023 at 7PM at the Cohoes Music Hall.

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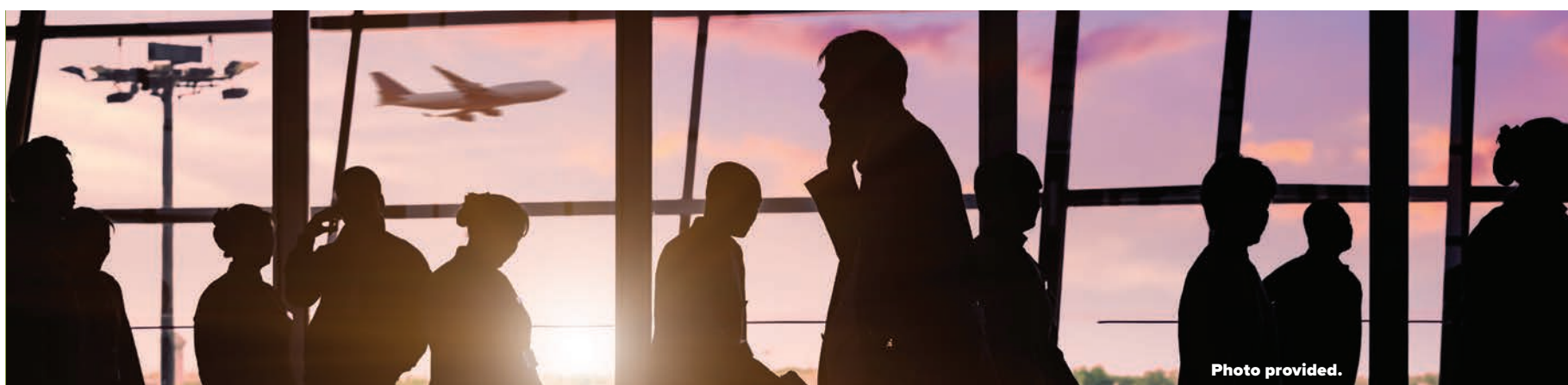
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the Crawl

BY JORDAN LANEGAN



Two hours from Albany to Newark in the fast lane. Forty-five minutes of quick-stepping person after person, everyone as impatient as the next, tap-tap-tapping and snaking their way through the TSA line. Another hour waiting for the plane to arrive and people to be seated. Minimal hours of sleep from the night before. Two hours to Fort Lauderdale. Twenty minutes of walking outside in the Floridan afternoon heat dressed in thirty-degree New York attire to the other side of the airport. An hour waiting to go through customs. Another forty minutes of checking bags and going through TSA, again. One hour of spare layover time to grab some grub and keep eyes open. Two and a half more hours of flying squished in the middle seat, with only fifteen half-ass minutes of dozing off right before touching down in Punta Cana, but alas -- we have arrived.

Except, not quite.

Exit the plane. Another nuts-to-butts, follow-the-leader situation of hot and sticky shuttle transportation to the outdoor, breezy Dominican airport. Go through another customs that barely feels like customs. Head to baggage claim. Avoid

tourist traps and hollering locals attempting to help you with your bags. Figure out where the hell you're going. Get rounded up like cattle and marched to another bus with limited air conditioning. Hold on for dear life as the driver tailgates, runs red lights, barely navigates potholes and honks furiously as motorcyclists cut him off.

Quickly grab your luggage and tip the man for the terrifying ride. Head to check-in with smeared mascara, debatably crusty hair, and an odor coming from your pits that even you cannot ignore. Smile, nod, hand over your credit card, drag yourself to the room, flop on the king size bed, immediately let out a sigh of sweet, sweet relief and turn on the shower to wash off all that damn nasty.

Who said traveling wasn't fun?!

This exhausting leg of the trip I am familiar with. It quite rarely, if ever, is the traveling itself that people are excited about, but rather the destination, and typically my destination is never an all-inclusive resort. Let's be real, not my style. I hop from hostels to cheap hotels to getting around on foot and saving my dollars for seeing what the place I'm visiting is really all about.

All-inclusive resorts are funny. Vacations in general, really. You psych it up in your head as your big getaway and tend to put this enormous, unrealistic pressure on it. But the amount of people that I saw sitting awkwardly at their tables with nothing to say or rave about was almost comical. Deadpan faces, all around. They flew thousands of miles away and spent thousands of dollars to sit there just as unhappy as they were at home. The pressure of expecting everything to be perfect on these types of things is half the reason why everyone cracks underneath the idealization of it all.

Walking into the resort, I knew I'd feel a little out of my comfort zone. I'm much more comfortable with roughing it over being waited on hand-and-foot. I expected the environment depicted by the HBO show "The White Lotus": the high-end, fancy-shmancy, snap to get what you want kind of place (let this be known: never, never, never, snap). I imagined many Jennifer Coolidge characters and saw myself relating more-so to her assistant, Portia. This was very much so the case.

Don't get me wrong, you can't make a place like this up. Picturesque almost doesn't even begin to

describe it. Sunny, warm weather every day. Palm trees and crystal-clear turquoise beaches. Multiple pools with covered cabanas, swim-up bars and table-side service. 24-hour bars, casinos, nightclubs, and entertainment on two separate stages every evening. Soccer fields, batting cages, golf courses, tennis courts, spa amenities and boutique options abound. Private boat tours, snorkeling, scuba-diving, windsurfing and kayaking. To this end, it does not cheap out on its promises.

Where it does lack is in the quality of the food and beverages, something I'd known had I done some Googling beforehand. Although the dining areas are set up as five-star, fine-dining establishments, the food itself is buffet style, which is lackluster on its own accord. The food never changed from night to night and was mediocre at best, even when choosing to dine and pay extra for the restaurants – a single piece of broccoli was given for the vegetable at the steakhouse we chose one night... one, single piece. Another night, I was stoked to order room service for the first time and quickly realized it was a mistake when all we got were two sandwiches with one piece of meat, half a slice of cheese, wilted lettuce, and cold fries for \$25.

In a way, I get it. You have hundreds upon hundreds of people on the property and must find a convenient and cost-effective way to feed them all, but as far as the drinks went, I don't think we received one drink that was made the exact same way. Consistency score, zero. Not to mention the time we ordered multiple shots of tequila and rum and only received tequila despite our best efforts to clarify what we meant.

I understand that the appeal of doing an all-inclusive resort is that it's easy. Everything is laid out for you. You've paid your dues upfront, when you wake up all you need to worry about is what excursions to do, whether to relax beach-side or poolside, what to eat and what to drink. It requires no effort. Sit, drink, eat, dance, be merry and attempt to forget your problems at home.

But, despite me having traveled through Europe and Japan, I don't think I was as prepared to see the drastic differences of being on a resort and then going off it. How can such a luxurious destination pulling in hundreds of thousands of tourist revenue annually have such a debilitating state of poverty on its surrounding parts? (After researching, I learned it's because of the multinational corporations they're

owned by, so rather than money flowing into the local community and small businesses, it's exported out of the country into the already deep pockets of the ultra-wealthy.) No wonder we feel as if the local community in places like this hate us. I would too.

It's difficult for me to travel in this style without feeling bad, or more realistically, without feeling the heavy implications of white privilege. The guilt goes without saying. I found myself often feeling empathic for the staff and all that they had to deal with (perhaps this is because I'm in the service industry, too.) Groups of many leaving unfinished plates, messy tables, and spilled drinks with no tip at all left for those who are cleaning up after them. All-inclusive does not mean tipping should be forgotten.

As nice as it was to get out of frosty New York, I'm not sure I'd ever do another resort. While it may have had its bonuses, the adventurer in me was dying for more. I am a strong believer in doing anything once, and so for that reason, I would recommend not knocking it before you tried it. Go get your Caribbean groove on.



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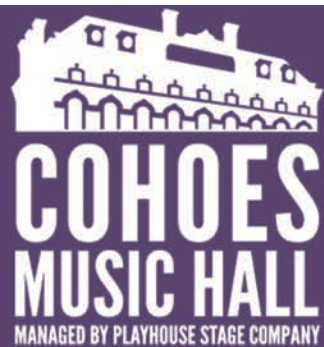
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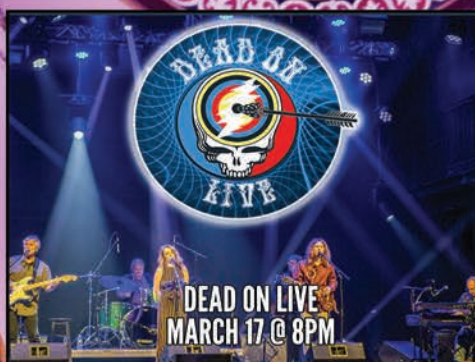
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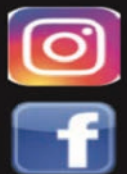
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My Mute Button Is Stuck in the On Position

BY JOHNNY MYSTERY

It's the Summer of 1995, July I believe. I'm spending three glorious weeks at the lake. It's probably the first or second day. I'm away from work, away from the city, away from the heat. Well, it only feels cooler out there in the sticks. There are no phones, no TV, no obnoxious garbage blaring from an overmodulated sound system crammed into some sweaty car, careening down an overpopulated boulevard. It's the closest you can get to Heaven here on Earth. All I wanna do is stay up late, sleep till whenever and teach my kids how to fish.

At this point in my life, I had pretty much given up on the music biz. I'd become a soccer dad. I had a straight job, a house and was intent on becoming a productive member of society, whatever that meant. There was no point in me picking up a guitar as far as I was concerned. The musical landscape had become a rapid wasteland. The promise of grunge never came to fruition. It ended the day Kurt checked out. Those Seattle bands never had much soul anyway. Hell, I can't even name a drummer from out there who could play a shuffle to save his ass. The radio was playing The Spice Girls and Green Day so I listened to talk in the car. I'm outta the loop and any new music I got was from glancing at MTV, which was rare.

I gave up checking out the locals. Stale wares on the menu of every place I looked. You like eighties cover bands? How about a little jam and toast? How about the acoustic alternative? Crab races? Mud wrestling? Karaoke? Whatever happened to my rock n roll??? Between you and me, it turns out I should have spent more time in Troy but that's for another episode of this continuing adventure.

Never mind all that. I just didn't care. I'm out in the country heading to the local general store to pick up grilling supplies. But on the porch as we walk in, there's a box of tapes sitting on a table. I just walk by really quick, cause like I said, I don't care. I have ground beef and hot dogs on my mind. On the way



out, I attempt to avert my gaze from the table of cassettes. But they call to me, like the song of the sirens at sea, who lure unsuspecting sailors to their watery doom. My '89 Sentra has a tape deck so what's the harm. How's the picking? "The Temptations Greatest Hits" looks good, a couple country artists, plus "Night Ranger" and "Oasis." Wait a minute, I've heard of "Oasis" but never really paid attention. Remember, I'm outta the loop. Weird looking, artsy fartsy kind of cover, obviously British. Boy, I've been burned by this before, but I buy it anyway.

Back in the car I pop in "What's The Story Morning Glory" and by what I read on the case; this album had just recently been released. Am I going to like this new music? I turn up the volume and on comes "Hello, Hello." This is promising but I didn't hold out much hope for the rest of it. I spend the ride back to camp mesmerized and I've only heard the first two or three songs. I played the rest of the tape in a boom box as I fired up the grill. What was I listening to? Somebody was making something good again. I recognized "Wonderwall" from somewhere and as the album continued, the strains of "Don't Look Back in Anger" sent chills down my spine. They were so obviously influenced by The Beatles, Lennon in particular. "Hey Now" spoke to me for some reason. The rest of the album was a swirling haze of guitar riffs, melody and harmony that I never expected to hear from a new band, EVER! They were crude yet somewhat sophisticated without being pretentious!

I spent the rest of those three weeks listening to "Morning Glory" intensely. Studying the lyrics and memorizing the melodies. I was inspired for the first

time in years. I couldn't wait to start playing my guitar again. Hard to believe somebody was making music like this, let alone it was getting aired and people were actually going to see it performed. This was the next big thing in my opinion, but it really wasn't. We're all waiting for that magical band, back then and today. Oasis never got as big in the U.S. as they should have. We want a band that's going to bust out like technicolor. We want an artist that's going to speak to us and make an impact on culture. It's too much to hope for now. Things have changed. Things like that usually sneak up on us when we don't expect. But there certainly are some weird things going on these days. We are all supposedly smarter now. At least that's what I'm getting. We don't need a band or idol to point the way. Can you honestly create your own inspiration out of thin air?

Is there really a next big thing in an increasingly muted world? Greta Van Fleet? Mmmmm.... "Oh, I dunno Davey." It's like pouring honey on an ant hill. What's the story morning glory? It's a question for greater minds than mine.

Switching gears here, I'm going to keep making an effort to expose some new and seasoned talent I happen to run across in our area.

On the horizon I'd like to introduce you to a local group named, No Such Things As Ghosts who play in the "punk" genre and you can sing, shout and scream to their original tunes. We need some fun like this. They'll be at The Crossroads in Pittsfield Mass. on March 4th and The Fuzebox in Albany on June 10th.

Now get out there and support rock n roll....

Matt Niedbalski (cntd.)

Continued from Page 11

vocals/guitar, Ken Andrews on guitar and John Paul Jones.

RRX: Any drumming horror stories or good drummer jokes?

MN: Oh, plenty of horror stories.

It all started with me playing the finger cymbal part in concert band 4th grade and the rope broke and rolled under the clarinet section. I was mortified. Then there was the time I played two crash cymbals and ride without wingnuts on the stands during this concert up at the Strand Theater. We hit an intense section and I play with my eyes closed otherwise I get distracted. I went to hit the crash and “missed” and thought hmm that’s strange, so I tried again and hit the stand, opened my eyes and realized I sent two cymbals flying and all I had left was the ride.

Finally, I was playing at this biker bar, the Great Notch Inn in North Jersey for my buddy Vin’s CD release party. Everyone was hammered and wouldn’t you know it was the only time I ever brought my own drums. The owner was a drummer and had an old set of Ludwigs as a house kit but on a CD release party, a

special occasion, I brought my Rogers. Second to last song there’s a couple doing the do se do and the bar is kinda tight and another patron connects with the couple and flies through my drums sending the rack tom flying and knocking the ride over. Luckily, my pal Steve Kirsty was playing bass and managed to catch the ride with his knee and told me he couldn’t feel his leg from knee down but was pretty proud of saving the cymbal.

As for drummer jokes, I don’t think mine are appropriate for an interview...

RRX: Fair enough! OK: Tommy Lee, or Travis Barker?

MN: This is a tough question. I would say Travis Barker. I’m not really a fan of either Motley Crue or Blink however I can tell Travis truly loves the drums and always has a practice pad with him. We all know what Tommy Lee loves.

RRX: Wrong! The answer is Buddy Rich. Do you know Buddy Rich’s real name? No cheating!!!

MN: Ted would be really disappointed in me, but I blanked. So, no. But I had to look it up otherwise I wouldn’t be able to sleep tonight. Bernard... take away my music degree.

RRX: Your secret is safe with me. Finally, how has your drumming changed over the years?

MN: This is a great question. I would answer by saying I am now at a point where I try to balance technical ability and musicality, and that balance was WAY off in my early 20s. I would see some of my heroes play some pretty impressive shit and then get up on the bandstand and try to insert that into the music where it wasn’t appropriate. I try to be more patient and listen to what the other people are playing more now and wait for space in the music to make a statement. Yes, there are times when I want to push someone and make the earth under them move a little bit, but I try to be tasteful. I heard a saying once, “the drummer is the mother of the band” It’s kind of our job to make everyone sound as good as they can while also bringing some energy and excitement to the situation so I try to keep that in mind when I play. I could go further into some philosophies but I already feel myself becoming long winded so I will leave it there.

RRX: You were great! Thank you for your time.

Matt Niedbalski is a name you won’t forget; just go see him play and you’ll see what I mean.

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Observations and Ramblings From a Cranky Old Guy

BY JEFF SPAULDING

This is a “very special” edition, my last, for now. As Sean Connery once said, “never say never”.

I’ve retired after 46 years in broadcasting, half of that so called “career” in the Capital District/Region (which phrase depends on your age, hell I still call it the Knickerbocker Arena).

This is most likely not the last time you’ll hear from me, but I’m in a mindset to enjoy the retired life a bit. Art Fredette suggested I do a thumbnail look at my journeys over those 46 years, so here we go.

Let’s talk about names. I mentioned before Jeff Spaulding is a pen name, in my case an on-air name, I’ve had quite a few of those.

My real name is Mike Marchinuke, proud member of the Class of ’74 of Shaker High School (go Blue Bison). It wasn’t till my junior year that I started to get the “performing” bug, which started with my first theater role as one of the Jets in “West Side Story”. After the roar of the greasepaint and the smell of the crowd, I decided I wanted to be an ACTOR! Thank goodness my mother and guidance counselor talked me out of being a waiter in New York City, and told me I could use my talents in a safe, secure profession, where there will always be a job whenever and wherever I wanted, broadcasting. As I look on the sad pathetic state of my industry, I wish I was smoking what my mother and guidance counselor were smoking.

Off to college in the Buckeye State I

go. Come 1977, after three years of “practice,” I get my first ‘paid’ job in radio (as opposed to ‘paid’ through payola, but the statute of limitations hasn’t ended yet). It’s part time to start, and in time turns into my first full time gig, doing overnights on a hardcore country music station.

Sidestep, here’s the problem in not just broadcasting but many fields of business, there are too many people doing too much work for too little pay. Where’s the next generation of whatever? How do they get training if the full-time people are doing their jobs and potentially yours as well? People learn by making mistakes, it allows you to grow, to become better, to see if you really want that career or not. I’ve met many young broadcasters who focused strongly as a part timer and became established professionals in the field. I’ve also met many young broadcasters who couldn’t announce blue light specials, they either (A) got out quickly (B) were rightfully fired or (C) got into management.

In 1980 I move to a new gig, where I stayed until 1983, that brought me to mornings on a hot rockin’ flame throwin’ Top 40 station. After a position adjustment (I got demoted), the stage was set for me to come home. In October 1986 I started five years of doing nights at FLY 92 as “The Crier of Desire”, Shadow Michaels, the biggest mouth and biggest ego of the Tri Cities. We kicked major ass in those days, and part of me wishes that kind of radio was still around today. Alas, not on

terrestrial radio, and I feel sad for those who only have cookie cutter radio to listen to.

In the early 90’s I was “On the Beach” (out of a radio job) though I used my so-called skills as a teacher of radio at The New School of Radio and Television (too many other names to include here). The year 1996 brought me back on the air, part-time to start, first on FLY 92, then the late Power Country 96.3. Realizing that gig may not have had the future I had hoped for, it was “Go Midwest young man” and I

ended up in Indiana, where men are men and corn is king. Forward to 2002 when family matters brought me to Vermont, then Pittsfield, then Glens Falls, and in 2011, back in Albany working for the legendary WGY.

On Friday, January 27th, my career ended, and I must say it was a hell of a ride. Am I done? Is it over? Will I be back on the air again?

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