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May 2023
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RRX: We met by accident at The Run Rabbit Run (Pink Floyd Tribute) show at The Linda, which was pretty impressive. I was outside prior to meeting you and I met Summer, who I found out later was with you.

BB: We're basically husband and wife, we've been together 26 years.

RRX: Oh, no kidding. Well, she was the coolest person I met there and then when the show was over, I ran into her again and you were there, and somehow we got talking about stuff and I realized that we should talk more.

BB: For sure.

RRX: Bozzy Boz, so that was the name that you used when you were tagging or was it called bombing back then?

BB: We were bombing.

RRX: Was the tagging terminology more from the West Coast?

BB: No, it all started on the East Coast really. Tagging in the 80's and the 70's. The 70's was all peace and everybody was doing big illustrations. In the

80's it changed up where my generation basically came up and everybody was a style fanatic for writing their name. We were doing big pieces, window downs at that time instead of the full cars, top to bottoms. The era was very important as far as that goes.

RRX: How did you get started with graffiti art?

BB: My cousin used to go out with a famous graffiti writer. I don't really want to drop names but he's a big guy and I just loved the way that he expressed himself. I took to it. He knew a whole bunch of other people. I was just a little kid in elementary school writing on the walls.

(Both Laugh)

RRX: You've got to start somewhere.

BB: Yeah basically. I had no idea what I was doing, but I tried. I had so many different names that I was infatuated with the Z's. My cousin used to write Boz and he gave me the name because I kept changing my name like 30 times a year.

RRX: (Laughs) That's

understandable.

BB: I started picking up on the drawing and it stuck!

RRX: Yeah it did. I found a few of your pieces online and man do I wish that I could've done that. I was doing a little spray-painting myself back in the day. Which I told you that one crazy story I have when I got busted by the cops and they thought I had I gun, but all I had were a couple of spray cans. But I never really got good at it. I just kind of had fun with, it but you mastered it!

BB: Well, I didn't master it but I have expanded myself so much. I still do it. I'm working on canvas and stuff like that now, but all of my friends are still doing it like it was the 80's still. They're doing big, big stuff, buildings, everything.

RRX: But nowadays opposed to back then you'd probably get more paid jobs I'd imagine. Where people are like we'd like this on our building rather than having to wear a ski-mask and hide. Or maybe

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I'm wrong?

BB: I still have that feeling like I did back then when I pick up a spray can. I still miss the old times. This permission stuff is not for me.

RRX: (Laughs) It must've been an adrenaline rush. Were you out there painting trains and all of that?

BB: Oh yes. And it was an adrenaline rush that you couldn't believe. I used to sneak out my window at 11 o'clock at night. My mother would go in the shower, and I'd climb out the window and down the fire escape. She'd be asleep and I'd come back just before 5 o'clock in the morning, just in time to get ready for school. It was fun!

RRX: Back then was the heyday when everything was getting started. I know graffiti played a big role in the whole scene from break dancing, beat boxing and early hip hop music. It all came together.

BB: Correct. It's the elements.

RRX: I believe that's what you discover in the Wild Style movie.

BB: Now to give you an idea. The Wild Style movie is dedicated to my mentor Tracy 168. That's why I didn't want to name drop but he's my mentor and I'm actually going to hang out with him tomorrow.

RRX: Hey, no kidding! Nice, that's dope.

BB: He put me onto it, and he was always against me doing it.

RRX: Oh, really?

BB: He played like the father figure role. He always took kids under his wing to show them art. It went a long way for me because he was my outlet. Me being at school and writing all over my books, that didn't go well with Mom. I got my butt kicked a lot!

RRX: (Laughs) Yeah, I'm sure. What borough of NYC did you grow up in?

BB: The Bronx, right where it all started.

RRX: That is where it began for sure.

BB: With Tracy being in the next building I used to cut school and sneak out to the trains. My mother was always up in the window, so I had to try to get around her, that was fun. But I did it. Just kept writing and drawing, he showed me a lot and it stuck with me.

RRX: That's what's up. I'm totally envious because I was very much into street art, I just never really did anything too dope. Although from that story I mentioned I did get into trouble and my Mom was very mad. She suggested instead of spray painting on city property, why don't you just spray paint your room? So I did.

BB: Oh, you had a good Mom then. My mother beat my butt every single time I picked up a pen because I wrote on everything, it didn't matter what it was. I made my own inks out of carbon paper and alcohol.

RRX: Oh wow. That was something I never knew was possible. I always wondered about the trains because in NYC in the 80s on the subway system, you had the possibility of seeing your work riding past you. But I was thinking about with freight trains it's kind of like one and done. Once you paint it, you're not ever going to see it again.

BB: Right. That's the fun though because you never know. Back in the days on the regular trains you would see a name and think wow what does this guy got? He's got a nice style, let's see if he does any pieces. And then usually you'll see a couple of pieces within a few months and you see the style progress. But the freight trains are cool if everybody knows you in some sort of way they'll send a picture and post it. Back then you couldn't but now it's easy, you just reach out on the computer and it's all good. It's the whole thing of being all over the place, like if you get a call from Virginia; like wow somebody saw your piece down there. Geez all the way down there! It's a fever once you pick up that can and you get a phone call like that. That's it, you're planning the next move!



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Bryan Cirillo

*Death Cult Pharmaceutical and solo artist on
proves punk will never die*

BY JAMES MULLEN

Bryan Cirillo. Photo provided.

GLENS FALLS - If you've ever heard someone declare punk rock dead, I can guarantee you that they've never crossed paths with Bryan Cirillo. One of the hardest working people in Glens Falls music, he performs both solo and with rising punk rock outfit Death Cult Pharmaceutical (DCP) which includes Brian Britton on guitar and Flora Star-gazer on bass as well. He's also been booking his own shows at Scally's Roadside Bar & Grill in Hudson Falls, attracting lineups featuring some true heavy hitters of 518 music such as We're History, Under the Den, Seize Atlantis, and ShortWaveRadioBand just to name a few; on May 19th, they're at it again

with a bill that includes Blase Debris, Ike's Wasted World, Gozer, and Ice Queen. I caught up with Bryan at Rock Hill Bakehouse Cafe in Glens Falls to talk about his journey in music and the concert series at Scally's.

RRX: Tell us a little bit about your musical journey like how did you get into music, where did you start, how have you grown, and what are some of your big influences?

BC: Well, I'm 32 years old which sounds weird to say, because it feels like yesterday that I found out about punk rock. Sum 41 and Blink-182 were a major influence on me of course, but then I had an older cousin who's like 7 years

older than me who was like "You think that stuff is punk rock?" and I was like "well, YEAH! Of course it is!" and then he showed me Sex Pistols and Bad Brains and it kept going further back in time. For me 1977/1978 sounded like a hundred years ago and I couldn't believe punk existed back then. Now 70s and 80s punk feels like it may as well have come out yesterday for me.

I started playing drums in a band called Irate Government when I was in 6th or 7th grade; I was in the Long Island punk scene as I got older which kind of bleeds into the New York hardcore scene, so that's where I first got to see what putting on DIY shows was all

about. I moved up here in 2011, didn't think I'd ever be in a band again but then Arch Fiends happened which was a band I was in with Dan Wade and Matt Bastard who are now in The Hauntings, so they've been a huge part of the journey as well. Then I moved on from that project and into DCP and my own solo material as well, but DCP has really been going strong the last 2 years or so.

RRX: You mentioned your solo stuff, you do a one-man punk band as Lex Naturalis; how'd you start doing that?

BC: That's just a backlog of everything that I've written since I left my

band No Vice on Long Island. I wasn't sure what I was going to do musically, or who I was gonna meet and what was gonna happen. I just had these songs, not all of them have lyrics but a lot of them have structure and are pretty much there. Emancipation, the title track of my EP from 2021, I remember I wrote that riff probably 10 years ago, but you stay with it and write lyrics to it. So that project is really just a back catalog, that's kind of my own baby I guess.

RRX: Yeah, and that's all brought you to Death Cult Pharmaceutical. You guys have some pretty awesome gigs lined up, including GEM Fest on July 22nd at The Shirt Factory in Glens Falls. How much have you evolved since you first came onto the scene? I know you added a new bass player recently and solidified a new line up, how has that journey been?

BC: That's been an interesting journey, I don't want to say too much. I mean, all the best to our former

members! We've had a few lineup changes here and there; Brian and I, the other Brian, Brian Britton, he's been the main squeeze. The two of us are the original members, most of the songs are songs we had written when we started jamming. For Screaming in the Rain, he had the guitar part written and we didn't really have a drum set. He had a studio, so we were messing around on the studio drum pad and I thought "This is cool". We had just met, we were working at the same retail outlet location and he remembered me from Gug's. Everyone remembers Gug's in Glens Falls.

Brian and all his friends who are now my friends remembered me from Gug's, and we're like one big happy family. A lot of us work together and hang out together. This is a band that has a lot of support around it already from our group of friends and we really appreciate that.

RRX: You guys have been putting

on some great shows at Scally's Roadside Bar & Grill in Hudson Falls, you're coming up on your third one on May 19th and every line up is more loaded than the last; how did that relationship start, and how does it feel to be able to bring shows like that to this part of the 518?

BC: It feels awesome because I hadn't really thought about running my own shows for a long time; I had done it a couple of times growing up on Long Island. Then I just thought, I could still do it the same way that I did it, I'd just have to find the right venue that would appreciate that and just let us do it DIY and not ask us for the world. Scally's has been great like that.

A friend of mine was friends with Amanda (Scally), and she had wanted to have a birthday party there and invite some of her favorite bands to play, so she had basically booked a show for her birthday, so here I am a couple of years later thinking I could do the same thing.

So I went to them, I worked with Matt Ames on it who I had been discussing other venues where he would run sound and I would get bands, he had said he was still DJ-ing at Scally's and IRod also DJs there, so they sort of knew them better than I did and they vouched for me that first time. Now we've built a lot of mutual trust with the venue, and at the last show they really expressed how excited and satisfied they were with the new crowd of people coming in.

I hand pick the bands on each show, and I have a roster of bands I'd love to include. I look at SuperDark and Dan Asylum down in Albany, these people are doing a great job getting an eclectic variety of bands from all over to show up in the 518, but they're doing it in the southern part; I think it's time for Lake George and the northern part of the 518 to start getting on that train.

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Hello and welcome to Capital Region Time Keepers, a monthly offering that focuses on our local percussion community. I have truly enjoyed doing this for the last year, and have loved interviewing every one of you Time Keepers. Last month while interviewing Brian Melick, it occurred to me that prior to talking with Brian, my focus had been on rock and jazz. Interviewing Brian not only aroused my curiosity for some of the genres that he plays but inspired me to look around at some other styles that I hadn't yet featured. I'm embarrassed to admit that I had somehow overlooked the Blues. So to make up for my oversight, I bring you (nice tight drum roll please); Rocky Petrocelli!

For those of you who don't know

Rocky, he was the drummer for the legendary Ernie Williams and The Wild Cats. Ernie is one of the finest blues artists to come out of the Capital District, and Rocky Petrocelli was the heartbeat of the band. I have seen Rocky play a bunch of times, and he is as steady as they come. His tasteful fills, unwavering time, and articulate dynamics can be seen in a number of Youtube videos of Ernie Williams (check out Melodies of Christmas from 2008), or with his current band, Dealt the Blues. So, please welcome Rocky Petrocelli!

RRX: Where did you grow up, and how did you get into drumming?

RP: I grew up in Castleton, NY. I started drums in the school band (4th grade) but quit soon after. But my

father noticed that I was tapping on everything, so he bought me a pad and sticks and took me to Kimball Music on Central Ave for lessons and I've been playing ever since!

RRX: Who were your earliest influences?

RP: RINGO!! Also, Charlie Watts, Levon Helm, Doug Clifford of CCR, Floyd Sneed of Three Dog Night...Bonham, Baker, Jim Gordon and many more through the years...and Krupa! And, my mother always had AM radio on and I loved and played to everything that came out of the speaker...so I guess Hal Blaine was also an early influence.

RRX: Did you have formal lessons?

RP: Oh yeah, my first formal teacher was at Kimball's. I think his name

was Jerry Bond? He had me get the Gene Krupa method which was my intro to Krupa! From there I studied with local teachers/players, Mark Galeo and my mentor, Ralph Garafalo. I went to Berklee and got to study with the great Alan Dawson for a couple of years. I also studied a bit with Roberto Petaccia (Maynard Ferguson) and Cheech Iero (Record Plant and vice editor of Modern Drummer). I learned a lot from all of them and use a lot of their techniques in my teaching to this day!

RRX: Talk about your first drum kit.

RP: Besides the Ward's drum set I got one Christmas with cardboard heads and the colorful Hawaiian scene on the front bass drum head that I

destroyed in about an hour?! My first kit was a Ludwig white marine pearl set that my parents got for me.

RRX: Talk about your current set-up.

RP: Mapex Armory kit. Basic 4 piece set with a Black Panther 5.5" X 14" snare drum...hats, ride and one or two crash cymbals (all Zildjian.) I also use a '67 Ludwig blue oyster pearl kit for certain gigs.

RRX: Who do you play with now? In the past?

RP: The gig that gave me a career was playing drums with regional blues great Ernie Williams from 1992 until his passing in 2012.

The current band I'm in is Dealt the Blues which was formed in 2017ish. I also have a side project: Rocky and the Mooseknuckles which plays a couple times a year.

I fill in occasionally with Soul Sky, Nite Train, Donna Tritico Band and Whitewater among others.

Before the "blues bug" bit me, I was in various rock and party/wedding bands. My very first "pro" band was with the Country Travelers playing square dances and country bars etc. I was 14 and they were up in their 30's.

RRX: You also run a music school, right? Tell me more about that.

RP: I started teaching private lessons in the early 80s at Hilton's. I had quite a bit of formal training which helped me form my teaching method. I always wanted to start my own place and when gigs were drying up in the early 2000's, I decided it was time to go for it. In 2005 I found a small space in East Greenbush with two rooms and it grew from there. I moved to my current location in North Greenbush in 2010. My main goal was to put together a teaching staff of all instruments with teachers who are really into education and teach reading, proper technique, etc. and who are positive influences. I also wanted to bring in master classes and workshops with local musicians

and national artists which you really don't get much of around here. We also hold concerts with the kids a couple times a year where we organize them into groups and have them perform on a real stage in a real venue with sound and lights and give them a real feel for performing. This year will be the first one we've done since the pandemic, and we plan on holding it at Nanola in June!

RRX: That's fantastic! Do you play any other instruments? What do you do for fun?

RP: No other instruments
I love Baseball, coffee with friends, listening to music, day trips, art museums, stuff like that.

RRX: If you weren't a drummer, what would you be doing?

RP: Some kind of driving job or something to do with numbers like accounting...

RRX: Put together your Dream Band, with you on drums.

RP: Travelling Wilburys would be fun!

But, if it's ala Ringo's All-Starr Band I would have Levon Helm on one side of me and Ringo on the other, Klaus Voormann (or Duck Dunn) on bass, George Harrison, Leon Russell on piano, Gregg Allman on organ, King Curtis on Sax and led by Elmore James?!

RRX: That would be some band! Anything else that you'd like to add?

RP: I've been blessed to make a career in music and teaching music. I was lucky enough to have a dream gig and through that I've met and became friends with a lot of local greats and world class musicians, and also got to play some amazing places.

RRX: Well, there you have it! Rocky is not only an accomplished, devoted player, but is also helping set the stage for future musicians. I call that a win for all of us.

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Jennifer Tefft

Capital Region favorite captivates listeners with emotive alt-rock energy

BY NIKI KAOS

Jennifer Tefft. Photo provided.

RRX: Jennifer Tefft's heartfelt and dynamic alt-rock voice has been a favorite of mine since we met in Troy. Watching her career grow has been an inspiration to me. Time to find out what's been going on lately.

You have this down to Earth vibe, but you're also professional and creatively focused. A balance you pull off well. You've made a career from your music. Something I honestly didn't have the guts to do.

I love the fact that you believed in yourself enough to go for it. I know there must be a lot of headaches behind the scenes that your fans don't experience along with you.

JT: It's a day-to-day battle. One day it's "Awesome!" "I achieved something!" "That's going to turn out good." And the next day it's like, "I suck." (laughs)

RRX: How do you balance the business parts with the highs of something like being awarded New England Music Performer of the Year?

JT: There's a constant reassessment. Am I doing this the right way? Do I want to drop all these cover tune gigs so that I can really focus on the originals thing and be considered a serious original

artist, which was my goal all along? But then I look at my bank account, and I'm like, nope. Can't do that.

It's a definite balance to make sure that I leave time to write and to do the original stuff. I just get so drawn into the business side. Booking gigs. Promoting gigs. Then I haven't made any music in three days, and that's ridiculous.

I've gotten much better about blocking out my time. And when I do that, I lose myself for a few hours. Whether it's learning a new cover song, or working on a new tune, or trying to polish something I've already written.

RRX: What is it like for you working in the in the world of sync licensing?

JR: When I first started doing that, I got lucky. Early 2000s, when it wasn't as open a market as now. You had to have an agent that could get you those placements. It was awesome! I had already written the songs, and they were just picking them off the albums. I did pretty well for several years.

As album sales income dried up for a lot of people, sync became a much more popular target for artists. Now everyone and their brother has a sync service,

right? The market is just flooded.

I took a course a few years ago on how to pitch directly to music supervisors. I got a couple of one-on-one sit downs over Zoom. The amount of material they get daily is mind boggling. They get so much stuff, you still really need someone there to push your stuff who has a personal relationship.

It's like any other aspect of the music business, it comes down to personal connections. I go through phases, where I'll work hard on that, and have some success. I have two different people I'm signed with now. I got a placement last summer on a song that was 20 years old. A really cool Hulu series. The money was a good up front sync fee, but by the time everybody got their piece, it was like \$900 for me.

RRX: And a LOT of work, right? A lot of investment into that relationship building.

JT: Yeah! It's totally about that. And that's something that I've been bad at over my career. Most people would meet me and say I'm a big extrovert, but I'm really not. It's very hard for me to network, especially to sell my own stuff. If you're representing someone else, that's

a different thing.

But just recently, in the past few years, I've said, you have to put your big girl pants on. Call these people. Talk to these people. Go meet these people. (laughs) I hate that part of it. Because I also don't like talking to people who think that the only reason I'm talking to them is because I want something. Sometimes you just want to have a conversation with someone and have them think it's a genuine conversation.

RRX: It's tricky. Part of what I admire about your tenacity through such a challenging business.

Your new band line-up looks exciting! Some new players on the roster?

JT: My guitar player has been with me since 1994. We've been together forever. And I think if he left... I don't know what I'd do. The new guys, I'm really excited about. And we're having so much freakin' fun!

It hasn't been fun for me for a while. I needed to make a change a long time ago, and it was just so hard for me to do it, but it was just time. It needed new energy. We're still really good friends. My former rhythm section, they're like brothers to me and I still talk to them all the time.

Drummer Christopher Georgenes and I had been connecting over Facebook for years, and he just genuinely liked my music. I got to know him as a drummer, and he's amazing. He's one of these people who must sleep an hour a night because he's got so much going on. He's always learning.

My bass player, Stephen "Sharky" Beccia, is a friend of another bass player who was sitting in with us. He sent me to Stephen. The first day, I was like, "That's the guy". We all have a great chemistry between us personally and musically. The vibe is magic.

RRX: It sounds like the boost you needed to get excited about music again.

JT: It was. And I'm grateful for my previous rhythm section and all the music we made together. It was just time to mix things up and come from a different angle.

RRX: You have a lot of fans here in the 518. What's your connection to the Capital District?

JT: Back in the late 90's we did a tour, and it was the first time we played in Troy, at Positively 4th St. I was like, this is gonna suck. Sunday night. We pulled into town. Tumbleweeds blowing down the street.

We got in and set up, and the place just filled up immediately. With all these people who were there to listen to new music. They just embraced us, like we were friends. It became more than just a regular gig. It became family. The same people would be there, they would bring friends, and it would be packed every time.

Art, and all you guys have always been so supportive. And www.radioradio.com plays my music when I submit it for airplay. I'm going into friendly territory. When I go to the 518, I feel like I am heading home.

RRX: That's great to hear. I'm so proud of our music scene.

JT: It's really special.

RRX: Here's something I've been dying to ask you for a while. What was it

like singing the National Anthem at a Red Sox game?

JT: Well, the Red Sox game was fun. That came after the very first time I ever sang the National Anthem in public, for a Patriots game at Gillette Stadium, which is 60,000 people.

I've always been a Patriots fan, and it's been on my bucket list. When I got that call, I said sure, I can do that. Leading up to it, I've never been so terrified in my whole life. I'd wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat.

But there was a switch that flipped the day before. Somehow, I managed to find my peace and calm. And my kids were on the field with me, cheering me on. It literally was like being a rock star for 90 seconds because everyone just loses their mind over it.

RRX: What's coming up for Jennifer Tefft Music?

JT: I figured we need a new name for the band because it's new people. It's Jennifer Tefft and The Strange. They picked that. And they ARE all strange. So, it works. (laughs)

We're doing one song with my friend Monk Dwayne, who is one of the most talented people I've ever met. He's a great writer, producer, and performer. And I'm planning to do an EP by the end of the year. If all goes well, we'll head down that path.

I'm in talks to sign with a new manager soon. I've been doing this forever, and it's time to get someone to help me, because I can't do this alone all the time. I'm hoping to get out there, do some regional touring and make some really good music.

RRX: I love that!

I'm looking forward to your solo show coming up Friday, May 12th 7pm at The Storefront @ 344 2nd Street, Troy, NY. Readers can visit <http://www.jennifertefft.com> to buy tickets, hear your music, and keep up with your latest events!

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R.M. Engelhardt

The godfather of the Albany poetry scene

BY LIAM SWEENEY

R.M. Engelhardt. Photo provided.

As a creative person, it's great to have creative friends that have, over the years, really transformed their discipline in the area. In this case, watching them take a scene adrift and shaping it into a strong and open community.

R.M. Engelhardt has been a driving force in the Capital District poetry scene, with School of Night, Albany Poets, and Albany Wordfest under his belt, he continues to push the bounds of verse and meter.

I connect with R.M. and we discuss fine black coffee.

RRX: You've in many hours and minutes over the years building and maintaining spaces for the Capital Region's poets. School of Night and Albany Poets. I should probably describe these efforts to our readers, but I'm gonna play hot potato with the mic and

toss it to you. What hath thou wrought?

R.M.: Wow.

Do you have the next 24 hours free? That's definitely a big question so I'll try to break it down a bit. I started reading poetry at open mics at the Qe2 in Albany roughly around 1993 and became addicted to it. So, to make it short I've been doing this all for about 30 years now, creating & supporting poetry open mics and opportunities for old & new poets to share their work. Vox at the Lionheart, The School of Night at Valentine's, Propaganda, Listen!, The Troy Poetry Mission & most recently, Invocation of The Muse, a monthly poetry open mic which I began at Lark Hall last year in downtown Albany. Also over the years I've created mixed media events, benefits for good causes like the annual Halloween Edgar Allan Poe Tribute. In 1999 I created the

group "Albany Poets (now a part of The Hudson Valley Writers Guild) with friend and poet Thom Francis as well as the now sadly missed yearly poetry festival The Albany Wordfest which brought a lot of attention to the Albany Poetry scene in general and attracted tons of poets from across NYS and states nearby to participate. There.

I'm going to take a breath now.

RRX: Poetry has been around forever; "Let there be light" might be the first verse, who knows? But poetry has changed, not so much in structure and flow, which it has, no doubt. Really in the place that society gives it. With writing being supplanted by content in the digital age, make the case for poetry: why that and not just living off memes?

R.M.: Well memes are an essential part of social media and can draw

attention to your work (humorous/political/etc) but in the end no matter how much poetry changes it is still an unending means of human expression. When this was somewhat new several years ago (Instagram) poets used memes as an integral part of their presentation and their writing and brought attention to themselves. Some with shock value, others with art. But as most things the fad it has come and gone. Become commonplace. So in the end it looks like the actual words and poetry, what matters the most actually won. Personally? I like creating funny memes which attract people to my work and the small indie press which I run Dead Man's Press Ink.

RRX: Anyone going to a poetry open mic as a spectator probably has a great, inspiring time, but going as a participant can be terrifying. I

remember the first, and maybe only poetry open mic night I went to, I was very nervous and just wanted to get the hell out, but I found it to be very supportive. How can prospective readers allay their nerves?

R.M. : 1st time I ever read in public at a poetry open mic I read two quick haikus so I could get off the damn stage as quickly as possible. True story. And I am still, even after all of these years an introvert who had to force himself to become an extrovert. Nervousness is a perfectly natural response to public speaking. Some try? Never return. But it's not because of the audience. My advice to those who would like to attend an open mic is to start small. Bring one poem or two, study them and concentrate on the words and pauses. Read them clearly but don't think about or look directly at the audience. Concentrate on the poems themselves. And keep doing this routine until it becomes easier at each

open mic you go to. There's nothing to fear but fear itself and that fear is imaginary.

RRX: As mentioned before, you have worked diligently to build a poetry scene in the Capital District and its hinterlands. That's not just a phone call and a three-martini lunch; it's real work. It's probably herding cats sometimes too. Take us through the day before the year's biggest poetry event, whatever that is. What are you doing?

RM: I recently read some of my new work out at the Fuze Box here in Albany on a Friday night, last night in April actually at an event called H E X which features both spoken word performances and then goth, industrial dance music afterwards. A great deal of my time and effort these days goes into advertising the event weeks & days before and on it. For quite awhile I'll focus on creating the ads, writing up the invites on social media. But on the day before any event generally I'm

working like everyone else. Then after work or the night before I'll organize the work I want to read and try to find a flow so to speak & and the order of the poems that feels right. Also? After reading & rereading them I make sure that I rest before going out. My routine is to buy/drink some coffee and smoke a few clove cigarettes before performing. It helps.

RRX: So R.M., tell us a bit about your new book and why it's different than some of the books you've published in the past? Also, are there any poetry readings or open mics locally that you recommend? Thanks.

R.M. : My new book of poems, RAW is kind of like a homecoming of sorts. The reason I say that is because in it's essence it's much more like my earlier work and the poems which I had published back in the days before the internet and when poetry zines still existed mostly on paper.

There is a lot of humor and sarcasm

as well as political mockery in it but also some poetry about the times we now live in full of fear and doubt, comprehension. I suppose some of the poems really ask; Where Do We Go From Here? There is also a poem I wrote for a friend who was found guilty of a crime he didn't commit which also makes a statement against all that's gone wrong in America and what we need to fix. You can get the new book through Amazon or Barnes & Noble. As for poetry and open mics in the Albany, Capital District area you can find many of them listed on The HVWG (Hudson Valley Writers Guild) monthly calendar on their website. There's a lot going on to be a part of. Invocation of The Muse Poetry Open Mic I host is held on the first Monday of each month at Lark Hall. 7:30pm SignUp*8pm Start. See you there!



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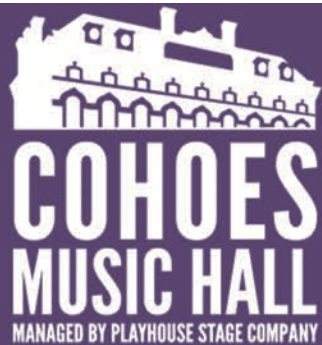
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I grew up on comics. X-men. Wolverine in particular. Something about claws that could rip through anything on the arms of a rough, beer drinking, cigar smoking Canuck was comforting alongside Metallica and Megadeth. As I got older, I got into the process and realized I had no artistic superpowers.

Zack Lynch is the founder of Blue Shack Comic Company, whose inaugural title, Vampwyre, explore some very

weird, yet very prescient themes.

I reached out to Zack Lynch and discussed the comic world.

RRX: You created a comic book company called Blue Shack, and its first offering, Vampwyre is on its second issue. Vampwyre is pretty out there, and in a great, poignant way. From what I read, it's about an AI phone that resurrected its owner so as to continue in its purpose. Did I get all of that right?

ZL: Yes. It is much more complicated than that, but that is indeed the basic idea for the mechanism of creation. The story follows the offspring Tyrus 2.0, aka Vampwyre, from creation to full awareness.

RRX: So Vampwyre touches on AI. We have strong feelings about real AI as artists and writers. ChatGPT might as well be Skynet to me. Do you think it's easier or harder to produce something that has themes like AI, that is

changing daily in our society?

ZL: It couldn't be any easier finding fresh source material. AI is quickly evolving these days. When I first had the dream of Vampwyre in 1994 it was pretty farfetched. Now it's nearly reality. So love or hate AI it's pretty easy to find an angle of discussion.

RRX: A Kickstarter is out there for Vampwyre, and there was a good amount of interest, judging by the pledges. Is it pledged? Or donors? It's

obvious that Kickstarter is the toolbelt of an indie project, but many sit there. How did you get so much interest in your project?

ZL: The interest on Kickstarter comes from face-to-face conversations and social interactions. A lot of phone calls, telling the story to anyone who will listen as well as the social media. Typically, once someone has heard the story they are interested. Whether or not they get to Kickstarter is another issue. Getting people interested in the story is all that matters.

RRX: There are a lot of fantastic writers and illustrators in the comic. And everyone, I imagine, has to work hand-in-glove. So let's lay it down. You're prepping a blank file. What program? And who lays what down when?

ZL: To get from Concept to finished product takes multiple rounds of applying "pen to paper." First I have to get my basic concept in the hands of an artist who can translate a few story

ideas along with some "bad doodles" into a visual concept. Next those concepts go to a penciller who illustrates the pages. Inks are applied by the Inker to finalize/finish the B&W artwork. Colors are then applied either by computer or watercolor in the old days. The words are last, they go on top of everything and are done by a "letterer". Now you have the artwork and it's off to the Layout dept. to get ready for the Printer. Having a professional at every stage is the key to a good production.

RRX: Blue Shack comics, as said before, has Vampwyre as its main offering. But I'm guessing there will be more offerings, or else maybe you would've named the company Vampwyre. Do you have any titles in the works, or a direction you want Blue Shack to go, a kind of 'Mission Statement'?

ZL: Vampwyre is just the beginning of the Blue Shack Earth. Tyrus 2.0 is the catalyst that creates all the other

titles and characters. He is the "Prime Mover" and essentially creates all of the other heroes and villains merely by existing. I don't want to spoil surprises but readers can look forward to adventures through time, cultures and geography on a fantastic Blue Shack Earth.

RRX: Now to run a comic book company isn't just about vision and talent; it's a business. You have to get the comics printed and distributed. And that's a huge thing. But it's one thing. The number of details can add up to hours of work a day. We know a lot of artists starting out with dreams, capes, and cowls. What one thing should they know?

ZL: Anyone who wants to start an indie comic company: don't do it! Not unless you are working with other folks with experience. It is a huge undertaking and costly. Comics are fun, making them isn't unless you know what you are doing. It can be heart-breaking. My advice is to find

professionals, take classes, attempt small projects first. Getting smashed your first venture out can dissuade an artist right out of the field.

RRX: If there's anything we missed, now's your shot to add it. Also, we're a big network. Who do you think we should have in our contacts, locally, regionally, maybe even nationally?

ZL: I can't forget to thank the Artists!! Along with myself the original concept art was improved greatly by Kim Vincent Harris. The Penciller is Jason Baroody. The Inker is also the Team Captain, Mark McKenna, who brought the other book artists along with him... Ross Campbell adds the colors to the pages, then Dezi Sienty letters and lays out the pages to wrap it up. Yes, I created and wrote the book but without these guys there wouldn't be a "book". Thanks guys!!

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Steve Hammond

An interview with Troy's quiet superstar



BY SETH CASALE

Steve Hammond. Photo provided.

Watching Ice Queen's singer and guitarist on his knees soloing over the heavy beat of the father-and-son rhythm section of the thrash band could certainly confound, if you were only familiar with Steve Hammond from his honky-tonk band The A.M.'s or had spoken to the erstwhile quiet musician. Here possessed of a piercing thrash vocal style and shredding guitar playing that seems miles away from what you knew.

I sat down with the man himself and found it all made perfect sense.

RRX: What are some early memories of music in your life, and how did those shape your desire to make music and your understanding of it?

SH: My parents weren't super musical, but there was music around. I grew up pretty rural, on a farm and ranch so it was mostly country music around. My parents liked 50's and 60's rock music as well.

RRX: It seems like that informed a lot of your country aesthetic.

SH: Yeah, it kind of did, I wasn't really into country. As a little kid I was, but then I very much wasn't into it through high school. It wasn't until my 20's when I got into old school country.

RRX: What was your first recorded musical endeavor, and when was that?

SH: When I was about 12, I was super into thrash metal. An older neighbor kid on the next farm over was a

metalhead, and he let me borrow tapes. I listened to thrash that he was listening to. I was starting to play guitar, so I started writing my own songs and playing them into a boombox at around 12.

RRX: Thrash bands like Overkill or something in that era 90's?

SH: Yeah, this would have been about 1990, it was pretty limited. Metallica of course Megadeth, Nuclear assault, D.R.I.

RRX: I've seen your recordings

pressed in vinyl a lot; do you always press your recordings in vinyl?

SH: No, definitely not, it's too expensive.

RRX: I've got your Ice Queen 7 inch.

SH: Yeah, that was recorded specifically for 7 inch but yeah, I have several solo albums I never put out on record. I put out the last Honky Tonk record on vinyl, but the 3 or 4 before that were just on tape and digital.

RRX: Tying into that, can you tell me about Lorchestral Recording Company?

SH: Yeah, Lorchestral Recording Company AKA Lorco its just me releasing my stuff. I had a couple sort of bad indie label experiences 15 or 20 years ago so after that I didn't worry about that and released it myself. There's one of my old bands that I still don't have the digital rights to our first album that was put out way back in 2009, so yeah record labels, just don't be dicks. The way I look at it is I make our music for myself, because it's what I like. I haven't ever worried about being successful at it. I look at success as having nothing to do with money or popularity. I'm happy when people buy it, but a successful musician is just someone that can fulfil their vision. Money and popularity are kind of a different business.

RRX: Do you engineer all your own music when you record?

SH: Mostly with some outside help occasionally. It's been a lot more convenient to just do it myself.

RRX: And you know what you're doing so...

SH: Well, I know what I'm going for. I hope I'm learning all the time.

RRX: Ice Queen, can you tell me something about how that came to be how you got in touch with the drummer and his dad?

SH: Ice Queen was a solo project. I just started recording lo-fi raw thrash stuff and I made 2 albums kind of solo

style. When I met Jay, we were just listening to some metal and he said we should make this band, my son's a drummer. So Jay and Devin VanderVoort are the rhythm section, maybe the only father and son rhythm section in thrash metal.

RRX: The lap steel on Honky Tonk Record Club #1, have you always played lap steel?

SH: I only play steel on one song, and the rest is a really amazing pedal steel player named Bud Melvin, he played on most of that record.

RRX: What advice would you give your younger self with regard to music?

SH: That's a hard one, I don't know if I'd do anything. Maybe I would say listen to different music earlier on that I didn't learn about till later on, some artists I didn't listen to till later might have had an influence sooner.

RRX: What advice would you give young or any age musicians struggling to try to make a dent in this industry?

SH: Going back to how I don't equate money and popularity with success I don't know that I'd have anything to tell a young musician except make music for yourself. Make the music you want to hear,

You mentioned Ice Queen, I have 3 bands in total currently. Rabid Children has amazing players, Chris Brown, Dave McDonald, Frank Moskowitz, and that band is a pop band, I like to call it heavy pop or noise pop. The other band, the A.M.s which is my honky-tonk band, play some of my solo stuff. We also play originals from the other guys. That band has Dan Prockup from Pony in the Pancake, Jason Reyes of Abyssmals on the bass, both those guys are singing with me and I'm switching between lead and steel guitar and then we have Jesse McCaughey the drums.

RRX: How about a website for Lorco?

SH: I basically have my Bandcamp which is Lorco.Bandcamp.com

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The Heights

BY JOE BARNA

Let's Pray...

NO...I'm talking about Keith Pray...Come along and learn about this beautiful man.

In every community there resides a unique crop of exemplary individuals that help elevate the consciousness and enrich the culture that exists within. One such person I have continually looked towards for guidance and inspiration is none other than saxophonist, organist, friend, educator, father and husband, Keith Pray. For the better part of 30 years this gracious man has offered his talent, humility, kindness, generosity, advice and wisdom to so many. Any attempt to list all those lives he has touched would be impossible. However, as one of the many he has unconditionally given his time and talent, I'd like to lend my perspective to the question "Who is Keith Pray?"

Most known for his rich soulful tone on the saxophone, Pray has found himself on nearly every upstate New York bandstand, both as a first call sideman and leader. His ability to seamlessly weave his way creatively through any musical situation challenges restraint and defies the limitations that many others struggle to emancipate themselves from. Whether in a jazz quartet, a big band, funk band, avant garde ensemble, rock band, latin group or otherwise this magician of music finds a way to be authentically himself and accommodating artistically. It's no wonder why he is beloved on and off the bandstand by both musicians and non-musician.

But wait, there is so much more to this gentle force of nature known as Keith Pray.

Did you know he is a black belt Ai-

kido instructor?

Did you know he has recently developed into one of upstate New York's first call jazz organists?

Did you know he runs a summer camp for instrumentalists dedicated to furthering their improvisational abilities?

Did you know he has a talented son named after groove master Maceo Parker who is developing into one of the area's top hip hop beat writers for other artists?

To say Keith Pray is a well rounded man who offers his talents in many varying arenas would be an understatement. His commitment to his family, the music, his martial arts discipline, his friendships and beyond is something to behold. It has been 27 years since this inspiring soul entered into my life. I can honestly say that the joy, camaraderie, ups, downs and musical collaborations with which we have engaged has helped shape my perspectives in ways I might have otherwise never known.

Let's go beneath the surface a bit, shall we...

I'd like to explore a question that seems never to present an explicitly definitive answer, "What is greatness?" Here's my perspective in relation to the subject of this month's article, Keith Pray.

Please indulge me for a moment...

I define greatness, pertaining to an individual, as one who possesses the characteristics of integrity, humility, sincerity, honesty, compassion, loyalty and self awareness. When combined in the musical realm with traits such as great tone, reliable time feel, pleasant sound, creative improvisationally, malleable stylistically, versatile, flexible and

all around professional I believe this is where a fork in the virtual road meets and one's label of greatness is warranted. In keeping with this thought, if a combining of these elements is a formula for defining what one might perceive as great then I testify today that Keith Pray is greatness. Why? Because, he is all of these and more.

Too often we overlook the contributions of those in our own communities. We bestow upon them the label of "Local Musician" in an attempt to shackle them down to a level that makes others comfortable, less threatened and equal. However, one must not mix words and convolute meanings. Local is a term that aids in defining one's geographical location. It's not meant to define the level as to which an individual contributes, elevates or perpetrates their given discipline. An artist can simultaneously live in a local community and possess within themselves a talent deserving of worldly recognition. I ask you, what if John Mayer, Wynton Marsalis, Justin Timberlake, SADE, Trey Anastasio, Dave Matthews or Bruno Mars lived next door to you in Troy? Would you label them as a local talent? The answer is no...Why? Because their talent has earned them the consideration of being great at a craft beyond the constraints of their locality. Labeling them simply as a local act or talent would be nothing aside from a gross attempt at diminishing the value of their contributions. Maybe by viewing artists through a lens of ability and worth, rather than from where they have chosen to set up residence, would offer an opportunity to the listener to see the deeper value in those around them.

Over the years I've heard many conversations where those such as Keith

Pray get described by others as "Great for a local player." I'm here to tell you that there is nothing local about the talent of Mr.Pray. Maybe I am biased because I love this cat with every ounce of my being. Maybe it's because of the sheer joy he has brought into my life. Maybe I say these kind words due to what seems like 1000's of performances we have participated in together. No...I say these words not because I am biased, but because they are true.

You see, greatness is reserved for those touched men and women with whom have done the work to earn such a confirmation. Across the board they have done so voluntarily while asking for little to no rewards in return. They live honestly and show courage through adversity, never wavering on their mission or surrendering their journey to anyone. Keith Pray, at least from my perspective, is one of the all time greats.

Now onto the show...

On Friday, May 19th the Keith Pray Quartet will be making their first appearance at the area's newest and hippest joint for live jazz, Alias Coffee Roasters. This show will include some of New York State's most in demand artists including pianist John Esposito, bassist Otto Gardner and myself on drums. In classic fashion Pray will hold down the sax chair, as he leads the way through an exhilarating 2 sets of exciting repertoire. The shows will be at 7:30 and 9pm.

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Link to the Power Chord

BY JOHNNY MYSTERY

Welcome to Dunn, North Carolina, Anytown, USA, population around ten thousand. It's not the kind of place you would expect anything extraordinary musically. There is no Beale Street. There is no Graceland or Sun Recording Studio. It is, however, the hometown of a guy whose influence on rock n roll is absolutely undeniable.

You've either never heard of Link Wray or know him as the man who invented the power chord. Ask any guitar slinger worth talking about. Pete Townsend, Jack White or Jimmy Page will tell you that Link showed them the power that they could have in hand if you just take some time and learn how to play. In the documentary film "It Might Get Loud" Page blissfully played air guitar to Link's infamous record "Rumble. But we'll talk about that song in a minute.

Link was born in Dunn, North Carolina on May 2, 1929. In the late 1950s, when rock n roll was just catching on, Mr.Wray was an innovator, constantly searching for ways to sound dirtier, grittier and even more menacing. This is my kind of player! He was a visionary who experimented with sound and would set the tone for decades to come. Hard rock, classic rock, punk and even metal can trace their roots to Link Wray.

Link joined the Army and fought in the Korean War from 1950 to 1953. During this time, he came down with a

bad case of tuberculosis and had to be hospitalized stateside for about a year and had one lung removed. Doctors told him to forget about ever singing. But it was the sound of that "geetar" that would bring him fame. The sound and aggression of his playing is unmistakable on his record "Rumble." Nothing up till that time sounded like it, live or on record. It sounded like a rumble, so much so that it was banned in several major markets because some city fathers thought it would incite riots and violence among teen gangs around the country. To this day it stands as the only instrumental to be banned from the radio in the United States.

"Rumble" came about as an accident, if you believe the way Link tells it. He and his band, "The Ray Men" were doing record hops in Washington DC and a fight broke out at one of them. Just for fun Link started out the famous chord progression and played it as the fight progressed. People began asking for it during the rest of the night, thus prompting Link to consider that perhaps he had something. Not long after, a song was worked up and arranged and recorded. In order to get the rough and raw sound he craved, Link poked holes in the speakers of his recording amp. The invention and availability of the fuzz box or distortion pedal, as it's also called was some years away. Slicing up your amp was the next best thing and it worked.

There was no luck in shopping the

song around until Cadence Records owner Bill Blair heard it and even he didn't like it until his daughter heard it and convinced him it would be a hit, which it was. They followed up "Rumble" with several other singles, namely, "Ace Of Spades" which was featured in the 1994 film "Pulp Fiction," "Rawhide" and "The Swag."

In 1971 Link proved those doctors wrong and recorded a self-titled album in which he sang and played every single song on the record. As the 70's rolled on he continued to record, and others were covering some of his catalogue. Want to hear one of the greatest live albums of all time? I recommend "Live At The Paradiso." I found it quite by chance in a cut out bin years ago and baby it smokes!!!

Link continued playing killer shows, right up to the end. He left our mortal coil on November 5th, 2005. His influence is still felt today from artists such as, The White Stripes, Iggy Pop, The

Black Keys and anyone who wields the almighty "POWER CHORD." Every year in the first week of May, Dunn North Carolina celebrates its favorite son with memorials, parades and parties because let's face it, parties and parades are what rock n roll is all about. Rock just takes everything fun in real life and just makes it bigger. Some people will do anything in life to be noticed. Rock stars just do it bigger.

On the local scene, be on the lookout for a band I've just discovered. They're a three-man group called "Same Old Rat." They just recently played in Troy at "The Eldorado." Their music is loaded with catchy riffs and great vocals, and it's flavored with a cool nineties' vibe. Let's hope they record soon.

That's it for this ish.... now go out and hit the bins. Hey, isn't Record Store Day coming again soon?

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