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December 2023
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TRACY BONHAM

22 She found success.
Then she found herself.

SUSAN ROBBINS

34 Area filmmaker and director covers the
Jazz Queen of Albany.

DARLINGSIDE

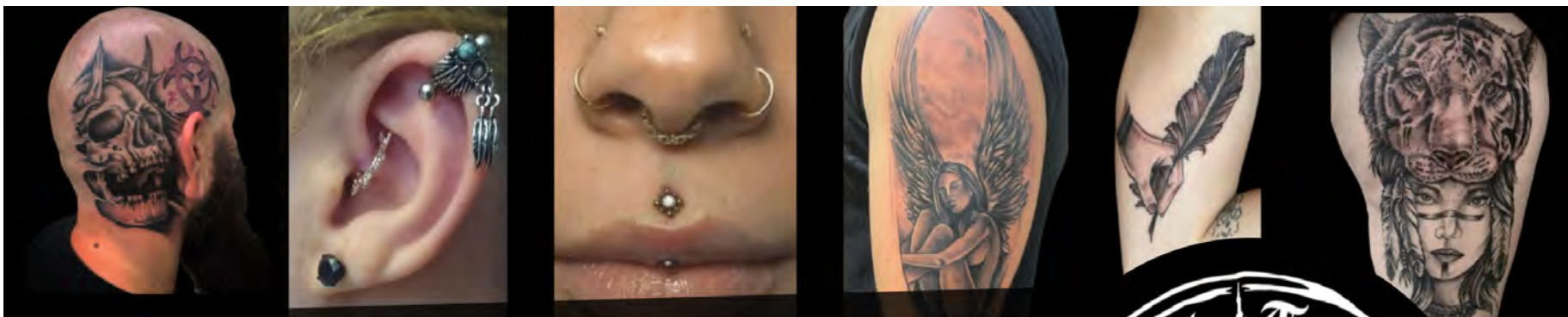
3 A band that finds its place also
finds a growing community.

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RRX: I wanted to make sure that we got this in our deadlines for our magazine was actually yesterday, so... I figured we could sneak this one in to promo the show that you have coming up in Saratoga Springs.

HP: Yeah. We're really looking forward to it. I love how you're a day after the deadline. It almost feels exactly like when we're trying to complete a record. It's like, so the masters were due yesterday and we now have notes on eight of the mixes.

RRX: I know how that goes. Yes, and now you have the the newest release, "Everything Is Alive," which I 100% believe in that concept. How long has that been out?

HP: It's been out since the summer time, mid summer and we've been basically out touring it since.

RRX: Yeah, I've been checking it out, I'm really into it. Darlingside as far as Caffé Lena is concerned... they really feel like you have a lot of history with their

venue in Saratoga Springs.

HP: Absolutely. Yeah, Lena is one of the most supportive community based venues that we have come up through on the music scene in the northeast. We're deeply appreciative to that venue in that community for helping to foster a career, when really nobody knew who we were. They took a chance on us and kept bringing us back. Each time we'd see the audience grow incrementally, see a lot of familiar faces and just a few more in the room each time, until it became a place we knew we would have a community each time we returned.

RRX: Definitely. I could tell just by the way that they're promoting the show that they're, pretty proud of you as well. And they're the ones that are presenting the show December 3rd in Saratoga Springs at the Spa Little Theater. It's gonna be a great time, I imagine. What does a regular concert goer like myself expect from a 2023 show from Darlingside?

HP: One of the fun things that we're

doing on this tour is touring in an expanded band format. In years past we've often recorded and produced our records with a lot of parts; sometimes 6, 8 or 10 instruments playing on a track with a lot of overdubs, drums and layers of harmony. Then we would go out and tour it in a sort of a stripped or acoustic format where it'd be a sparser arrangement of the tunes.

This time around we're presenting the record much closer to the full arrangement. We have the percussionist who recorded with us, Ben Burns out on the road. He's done drums on our last two records, so it's a treat to be able to have the exact drum parts, sounds and things from those last two records being presented live. We're also touring with Molly Parden, who's on bass and vocals. She sings on, I think 10 or 11 of the 12 songs on "Everything Is Alive." So, her voice in the blend is a big part of the album sound and harmony arrangement.

Having Molly live is again is really a





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Darlingside. Photo provided.

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treat for us to get to present those recorded arrangements accurately. We also have Deni Hlavinka playing keyboards and singing. She collaborated on the album with vocal arrangements, keyboards and even like a vocoder for more experimental vocal play. We've collaborated with her in the past as well. She joined us in the studio during the pandemic to do these piano and voice arrangements for "Birds Say", to make a deluxe re-release anniversary of that record.

We love collaborating with her as a pianist. So it's a six person band, it's a much fuller and thicker sound. We are really enjoying being able to present the album accurately.

RRX: I can appreciate that, especially being in a band myself. Many times we were discussing little things that we could add in on the recording but we knew we couldn't pull it off live. I guess the biggest example of that would be "A Day In The Life" from the Beatles. I don't think they've ever been able to recreate that live.

HP: Whether it's layered instruments or especially for us, layered vocals... we have a ton of vocal harmony, but a big part of our sound and our recorded sound is vocal unison. Having a few voices, sometimes 2, 3, 4 or many layers of our voices on each individual part singing on top of each other to create that sort of chorus sound. Now, live it's really exciting when that upper harmony is being sung by three people at the same time. It gives us that palate to be able to create that kind of chorusing, that lush sound.

RRX: You play cello, guitar and do vocals as well and I was reading online... you've been playing cello since you were six years old.

HP: That's right. Yeah, it was my first instrument. I started as a little kid and came up playing Suzuki cello in the traditional classical format, chamber music and orchestral music. I continued with that until college when I started to

experiment a whole lot more with guitar and songwriting. After college, when the band formed in Western Massachusetts, that's when I smashed those two different worlds together and brought the cello back around into the fold to experiment with using the classical instrument and in a sort of modern music format; seeing where those worlds intersect.

RRX: It works well, it definitely does. I'm looking at my youngest son, he's really into music but I can't get him to listen to a word I say. I know kids just want to rock-out but there are steps and building blocks you need to learn first.

HP: The Suzuki method that I grew up studying began slowly. I remember as a six year old, I wasn't allowed to bow on the cello or even play a note on it until at least a month into it.

My cello professor at the time said we're not even gonna take the cello out of the case. We're just gonna spend a month working on the bow grip and making sure that you have that fundamental right hand rock solid before we even pick up the instrument. It was bow grip for a month and then we put the bow down and just held the cello to work on posture and positioning with the left hand.

If you start doing everything at once there's a lot of variables in the system and if one of them is off... the whole thing starts to collapse. Only after all of those individual elements were working and solid was I finally allowed to then play cello, quote unquote. That was probably 3 months in.

RRX: Wow. I think I'll revisit my approach with my son's musical training. Thank you for your time we look forward to your show, Caffè Lena presents Darlingside at Spa Little Theater in Saratoga Springs on Dec 3rd -7pm

HP: I'm feeling really fortunate after the years of waiting at home during the pandemic and to be back out real rooms with real human beings again.




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RRX: So today is gonna be unique. My car is in the shop so it'll be the first time I ever done an interview on public transportation. The bus should be showing up any second.

JM: Well, that's good. I feel like we're doing our part and reducing our carbon footprint. We're doing an interview on a bus first ever for me.

RRX: I mean, why take an Uber? These buses are way cheaper?

JM: Yeah, I think I might still have some some bus pass credit on my phone. You want me to send that to you? I'll pay for your bus ride this morning!

RRX: Yeah, definitely. So, how's it going, man?

JM: Super well. Just listening to

some music, preparing for the next Jam and Toast show. It's beautiful out!

RRX: Yes, it is. Yeah, you can't complain right now in the Northeast.

JM: No, not at all. I'm a fan of winter though. What about you?

RRX: Not at all, but you're in Vermont though and I mean... I think there's a little bit of a difference there with winter enthusiasm.

JM: Yes, we tend to be able to have a little more fun in the snow as opposed to just using it as a city wide trash can.

RRX: Exactly. Oh, the bus is pulling up. This is gonna be fun.

JM: This is unique. I like it.

RRX: OK. Alright. Now it's official. Now we're officially riding. Yes. This might be the first CDTA interview ever.

JM: It's like comedians in cars getting coffees, but it's DJ's on a bus doing interviews.

RRX: I actually wrote a song and there's a music video for it on Youtube. Look up Rob Smittix the song's called "F**k This, I'll Never Take The Bus Again" I wrote that back in like 2005. So, I guess my premonitions are not accurate.

JM: You're gonna need a follow up single. "Dammit. I Had to Take the F**king Bus Again."

RRX: Oh my God, I really should. Right? But... we were talking about the weather and the snow and how you have more fun with it in Vermont than us here in the urban areas of the Capital Region.

JM: I mean, when it's in your

backyard it makes it a lot easier because there's nothing worse than getting off the slopes, loading into your car and sitting in your car for an hour and a half. Then you get out and your legs are stiff as hell and you can't even make it inside your house.

RRX: It's crazy because I've never skied. Not once in my entire life but I've been to almost all of the ski resorts with one of your colleagues, Jason Keller. We would do live-remote broadcasts from ski resorts back when we used to work at 103.5/103.9 WQBK/J The Edge together.

JM: The two least likely people to find on skis, who have visited more ski resorts than anybody else. I love it.

RRX: I'm not gonna talk too much about Keller but, him and I started at

The Edge on the exact same day back in 1996. Keller, I still consider a friend and he is still is one of my references on my resume. What I'm looking forward to is we will be reaching out to him soon to let him know that we will be honoring Keller at the 2024 Listen Up Awards with a Hero Award. This is for his contributions in our music scene.

JM: Yeah. Well, you can't do much better for a friend than Jason Keller. That's for sure. How fantastic and very well deserved. I love knowing that and I'll keep my big mouth shut.

RRX: So, besides that, I see that EQX just celebrated it's 39th birthday.

JM: November 14th, 1984. The station first flipped on t 10:27am with our first song ever being a disco song. We were, adult contemporary at the time.

RRX: No kidding. I did not realize that.

JM: Yeah. Not for long at all, it kind of turned a little AAA from there and then in the early nineties switched to the alternative format.

RRX: See, that's when I think the popularity really started growing or maybe I was just at the age where I needed to find myself a station. EQX has been a favorite of mine forever. I've always had so much respect for EQX and you guys are still out there doing it. We're independent too at Radioradiox. I feel like us independents are really doing more than a lot of these big commercial corporations these days. We're doing more presentations, we're putting on more concerts, we are doing more sponsorships. I don't know where the curve shifted but it seems like somehow it has and I'm down with that.

JM: Well, I think that the corporate radio stations don't have the staff to be able to cover anything or at least the staff that's willing to put in the hours. I think they just require too much money instead of supporting something and getting it on the air and

helping it grow and build. You know? When it's just about the money that just mucks everything up.

RRX: I agree with that. Brooks was a cool cat, he started EQX, right?

JM: Brooks Brown, who unfortunately passed away about 10 years ago started the work on this place four or five years before it ever went on the air.

As far as just buying the house, he put an addition on to it, turned all the bedrooms into studios and offices, we've got a downstairs space where sales people used to have their cubicles but everyone works from home or the road now. So we turn that into what we call studio BB in honor of Brooks Brown and that's where we'll have bands come in and and perform house sessions. Although we've partnered up with Caffe Lena recently and have been doing them over there.

So we've been enjoying doing that. But yeah Brooks... He found out who had the phone number that ended in 1027, got in touch with them and bought that number. He made sure that our PO Box is 1027. The most impressive thing was that he convinced the Carthusian monks who own Mount Equinox to lease a space on the top for our tower and our transmitter. These are monks who have a vow of silence and somehow he talked them into leasing us the space so our 50,000 watts can go out to the four states that it does.

RRX: Brooks is not a sell-out whatsoever, he was talking to me about getting offered millions and he was like, I'd never sell.

JM: He would let potential buyers take him out, wine and dine him, get the whole spiel and then just be like, no f**k off! I have Brooks' glasses on my desk, which is kind of a cheesy little thing because I like to say that it helps me keep his vision for the radio station. I'm really glad you had the opportunity to meet Brooks because it's impossible to explain, who he was to people who had never met him as hard as you try.

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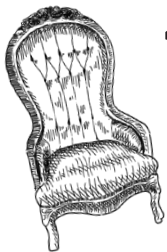
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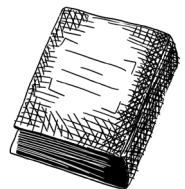
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Leo Kachidurian

*Capital Region
Timekeepers*
BY OP CALLAGHAN



I first saw Leo Kachidurian playing with Doc Scanlon. I was relatively new in the area, and went to The Saratoga Race Track for a day of betting when I heard the band from a distance. Being the nosey music geek that I am, I made my way to the other entrance to watch the band. I immediately focused on the drummer, who was not only a great player, but so relaxed and just looking cool as can be on an exceptionally warm Saratoga summer day. Years later, while celebrating a mutual friend's birthday, I was able to finally meet and talk with Leo. He is a lover of all things music, and an avid supporter of the local music scene. He's a terrific player, a terrific guy, and I'm lucky to call him a friend. Ladies and gentlemen, let's give it up for Leo!

RRX: Welcome my friend. Let's

start at the beginning; How did you get started drumming?

LK: I originally wanted to be a bass player. I was 8 when I saw the Beatles on Ed Sullivan. Next day I wanted to be a Beatle. Dad took me to his friend at Romeo's Music but my hand was too small to reach around the guitar neck. I ended up with an accordion for a few lessons but that wasn't happening. Then a couple of guitar lessons but I wasn't getting it.

Finally my Dad let me take his St. George bass and tweed Fender Bassman amp. During an unauthorized transport of the amp over to my friend's house in a little wagon, the amp tipped over into a snowbank. We got there and plugged it in anyway and of course blew it up. Needless to say, my bass career was over.

A few years later, Dad agreed to help me get some drums.(they didn't plug in) He actually borrowed a kit from his friend Bill Rezey. Beautiful white marine pearl Rogers with a bass drum, snare and a floor tom.

RRX: Did you take lessons?

LK: I took lessons from one of Dad's friends named Paul Beuhler. His studio was in Watervliet near Brownie's Indian Motorcycle dealer. I took the bus from Lansingburgh to downtown and then walked over the bridge. This was just the beginning of many teachers over the years. I have been very lucky to study with some incredible people.

I moved to San Francisco in 1979 and took lessons with Johnny Rae. He was an incredible Drummer/Percussionist who played with George Shearing and Cal Tjader. He introduced me to Latin playing.

In 1982, after moving down to LA, I studied at Dick Grove Music Workshop. All the teachers at that school were experienced recording and touring players. The percussion program had Richie Lepore (Bette Midler, Elvis), Jerry Steinholtz (Diana Ross, Lee Ritenour), Nick Ceroli (Tijuana Brass, Merv Griffin Show) and David Garibaldi (Tower of Power). After I graduated from the program, I took some private lessons with David when he was writing Future Sounds. I also took some private lessons with Joe Porcaro.

RRX: Wow! Do you come from a musical Family?

LK: Yes. My Dad was a Sinatra style singer with a great voice. He had charisma and an easy going delivery. He played clubs all around the area. And my cousin, Dicky Charles, was a really great drummer in the 60's and 70's. He was in some legendary bands

including The Aerodrome (house band), Mother, Flag and Country and Merlin's Minstrels. Growing up with these guys definitely set me on my path.

RRX: Tell me about your first kit?

LK: My first kit was a Red Sparkle Fuji brand made in Japan. I beat the hell out of them until I could save up for a Ludwig kit.

RRX: Talk about your first real gig. What bands have you played with? Any recordings?

LK: My first real gig was with my good friend Rick Rourke. I replaced Gary Sagendorf in their band. The first gig was in Bangor, Maine. On the road at nineteen, I learned a lot about how to be in a band. We played all over New England. Then the disco monster took over and we went for that ride. I did that for about a year and quit. The jumpsuit was too much for me. I came home and played with Charlie Smith for a while before moving to California.

In San Francisco I got a gig with a guy named Domingo Balinton who had been with Lydia Pense and Cold Blood. That was short lived. Eventually I moved to LA. Played with a bunch of Top 40 bands around LA. After music school, I got into the wedding band circuit. The money was good and the players were generally well versed in all different musical styles. World class players would show up on the bandstand on any given weekend. I tried to keep my mouth shut and my ears open. Guys like Jeff Clayton (Stevie Wonder), Mike Paulo (Al Jarreau) and Eric Marienthal (Chick Corea) would come and play weddings when they were available. I learned so much from those guys.

I did some recording while I was out there. I started out playing on songwriter demos. Did a little piece for

a B movie for my friend Robert Etoll. Then they invented the dreaded drum machine and that stuff dried up quickly. Everyone bought a drum machine and all those little \$50 demo gigs were gone.

I came back here in '89 and one of the first people I met was Chuck D'Aloia. That was very lucky for me. It opened a lot of doors and I met all the amazing Albany players. I was in *Mother Was Right* and Doc Scanlon's Rhythm Boys at the same time. I got to play with Jay Traynor and the Americans. Did an album with Mike DeAngelis and started at Mahar's with CD3 all in the first year back here. I went back to LA in '91 to give it another shot but that didn't quite work out so I came back home.

I was lucky enough to do a lot of work with Ed Tourge and Chuck D'Aloia. I've done a ton of playing and subbing with many different bands.

These days I play when the phone

rings. I'm involved with a couple of bands right now. I've also been doing some recording at home.

RRX: Amazing! Who are some of your influences?

LK: Dicky Charles, Buddy Rich, Steve Gadd, Jim Keltner, Jeff Porcaro, Hal Blaine, Jim Gordon, Vinnie Coliuta and of course, David Garibaldi and all my teachers. My friends Mark Foster, Gene Garone, Chris Garabedian, Gary Sagendorf and David Calarco have been big influences over the years. This area is full of amazing musicians and I always try to pay attention. Ace Parkhurst, Bernie Muleeda, Ed Tourge, Chuck D'Aloia and Bert Pagano to name a few non-drummers who have influenced me greatly.

RRX: Do you play any other instruments?

LK: I fool around with timbales and congas

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

LK: I would be a bass player.

RRX: Are you a drum collector? Talk about some of your kits, as well as your current set-up.

LK: I don't really collect drums. I have a '67 Ludwig kit and a Ludwig cocktail drum that belonged to my Dad. I've owned most of the major brands over the years. Now I play drums that I've put together myself. Keller shells and a couple of repurposed vintage shells that I wrapped in Tamo Ash veneer. I also have a set of DW Performance shells with Drum Factory lugs. I use a '90's Black Beauty snare that works for most everything.

RRX: What is some advice you would give to young drummers just starting out? Any advice for old guys like me?

LK: Young drummers should learn to groove. Support the music. Listen and add to the conversation. There are many ways to approach a song or tune. Ask yourself - what's the focus here?

Am I supporting a singer or soloist? Is it time for a busy drum part?

It comes back to listening and playing what works for that situation.

I think people my age should just keep practicing. It's a lifelong pursuit for me.

RRX: Agreed! Who is your favorite drummer and why?

LK: I really don't have one favorite. I try to take away something positive from any drummer who is out there playing.

RRX: Anything else that you would like to add?

LK: Thanks for asking me to do this. I'm sorry for dropping all those names. I'm very grateful for all the players I've encountered along the way.

Thank you, Leo! We love name drops!



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*Manifesting the
Musical Sweet Life*

Tracy Bonham

BY NIKI KAOS

Tracy Bonham. Photo by David Young.

In Part 1 of my interview with Tracy Bonham, we talk about the challenges of being swept up in the music industry's hit making machine after the success of "Mother Mother". The conversation continues as I learn how Bonham took control of her musical journey.

RRX: People have an illusion, I

think. The cost of celebrity makes the music part a little harder.

TB: I agree with you. When I look back to the time when I was really successful and feeling that weird pressure, people treating me differently, I started to really not like it. And I'm all about manifesting. So, I manifested a lot of this... slow down. I wasn't comfortable.

And it was a few years of feeling not comfortable. I could have continued to push, push, push, even though things were harder and harder with the music business. But I was like, hell, why do I wanna push that hard if I'm gonna be miserable by being famous?

RRX: I admire you for having the maturity to make that decision. When I see people who take time between albums it's an opportunity for reflection. A time to learn from your last process and create something that is meaningful to you.

TB: Well, now that I'm in this position, I can look back and go, wow, cool! Thank you! But at the time, I was frustrated. I wanted momentum. I was jealous of bands that had mild or moderate success but kept putting stuff out. I was jealous of those guys because they were working! I had this hit. I was up on this mountain. And then I was down in the field.

RRX: It's gotta get in your head a little bit?

TB: Oh, yeah, it definitely does. And then it took forever, right before my second album imploded so much. I didn't have the right manager. And I was constantly waiting for other people's permission to do literally anything. I needed permission to go into the studio, or make an EP, or do a gig. And I fell into that trap too.

That's my own shit again. Therapy... Whatever. I wasn't saying, "Hell no! This is my career! Get me so and so on the phone!" I was never that kind of person.

RRX: I read everything changed from *Burdens of Being Upright*, and on your second album you went from working with people that you knew to working with different people. Even if you wanted to, it might not have benefited you to speak out because that was not what they wanted. They didn't want you to say shit.

TB: Oh, yeah. It's not really welcomed. I mean, there are artists that

did that. I totally admire people like Ani DiFranco didn't even let herself get swallowed by the machine. And my upbringing, I've come from a long line of women who are kind of like passenger seat, you know, so I didn't grow up with a Gloria Steinem type as my mom.

RRX: So, all those things shape you as you go through the corporate hell of the music industry, and you started figuring out what you did love and making albums that were truer to your growth as a musician?

TB: Absolutely.

RRX: That's the happy ending to surviving nonsense!

TB: It's really true. And, you know, maybe I didn't get out and reach all corners of the world. And maybe I didn't make the kind of money that was expected back at that time. Everyone was expecting all of this money, and I saw glimpses of it, but now I look back and I'm like, that's fine. That would have eaten me alive. I'm really happy with my choices, you know?

RRX: You manifested what you needed, which was to get away from that industry control. I think it served you as a musician because you have an independent spirit and intelligence to your writing. Your lyrics are a little bit like a verbal side eye. I'm a big lyrics girl. It's what draws me into the song.

And your instrumentation and production tell a story, embodying the mood of the writing. Your later albums have elements of a storytelling feel. Reminds me of something like Jason Isbell does.

TB: For me, it's like really old Willie Nelson. Like even his demos from the fifties. His snarky, funny, ironic lyrics are great.

RRX: I like that you've mixed in some of that folk element on your later work. You're not just stuck in the classical world when you write, rather, that experience gives you the bones to build out songs in all sorts of genres.

Let's dream about the future. If

time and money were no object, what would you want to work on right now? And do you have any people you would love to work with? Maybe who you haven't had a chance to?

TB: I love that question. Because I asked that question of myself one time on an airplane. Those are my deep thoughts. Deep thoughts come to me on airplanes and stuff. And, so I'm gonna say exactly what I'm doing right now, which is the best answer. Like if I had all the time and the money in the world. I'd be doing exactly what I'm doing. How lucky am I?

Right now, I'm writing the best songs I think I've ever written. I'm gonna make an album which, I'm so thrilled, you're the first person I just told, except for my band and a few friends. I'm gonna start recording in December. It's time. And my trio that will be with me on New Year's Eve are phenomenal. They're jazz musicians who like to rock.

Oh, my God, I have musicians who listen! They don't just play, they listen. That's opened up a world so much for me that my music is expanding. And I'm so happy with the music that I'm making as Tracy Bonham.

Okay, I could say maybe I would hire a nanny and a cook and stuff like that so I could tour more. That I would do. So that's the one thing I feel like I'm suffering through is I can't get out on the road because I'm a mom and this is challenging. It's complicated.

But the other thing I'm doing right now that I'm so proud of that I wouldn't change for the world is I'm working on my music education curriculum. It's called Melodeon. My bass player, who is also my wonderful life partner, and I, creating this music education program/curriculum that is my jam!

It incorporates everything I love all into one thing, which is music, obviously, music theory and education, because that was my foundation as a

classical pianist and violinist. I love theory, harmony, ear training and children! And I have been developing this for all ages. I've been writing all these songs that teach the fundamentals of music.

RRX: That's so cool! My mind is blown right now, and I'm really excited.

TB: The last time we played in Saratoga was at Caffe Lena and we did a double bill of Melodeon was the family concert and then Tracy Bonham at night, after hours. And that literally is my dream, to do both and travel around and tour. The beautiful thing about Melodeon too, is that it's my same world-renowned jazz trio.

I need to make some videos and put them on YouTube of them doing a silly song about time signatures. These people have played with classical music giants, and here they are doing Sesame Street gags. This is why I'm so happy. This is really what I want to be

doing. So, time, money, whatever. If it wasn't an object, I'd be doing that more and having my kid with me and somebody making nice meals.

RRX: I am going to sit here and manifest that with you right now. Because I think that sounds like an amazing life and I think you deserve it.

TB: Thank you. I do, too. Darn it.

RRX: Thank you so much for talking with me. I can't wait to catch your set with the trio New Year's Eve!

People can catch Tracy Bonham on December 31st at Saratoga New Year's Fest this year! For tickets and more information, visit: <https://www.saratoga.org/tourism/saratoga-new-years-fest/>

To learn more about the Melodeon education program, check out melodeonmusicshouse.com



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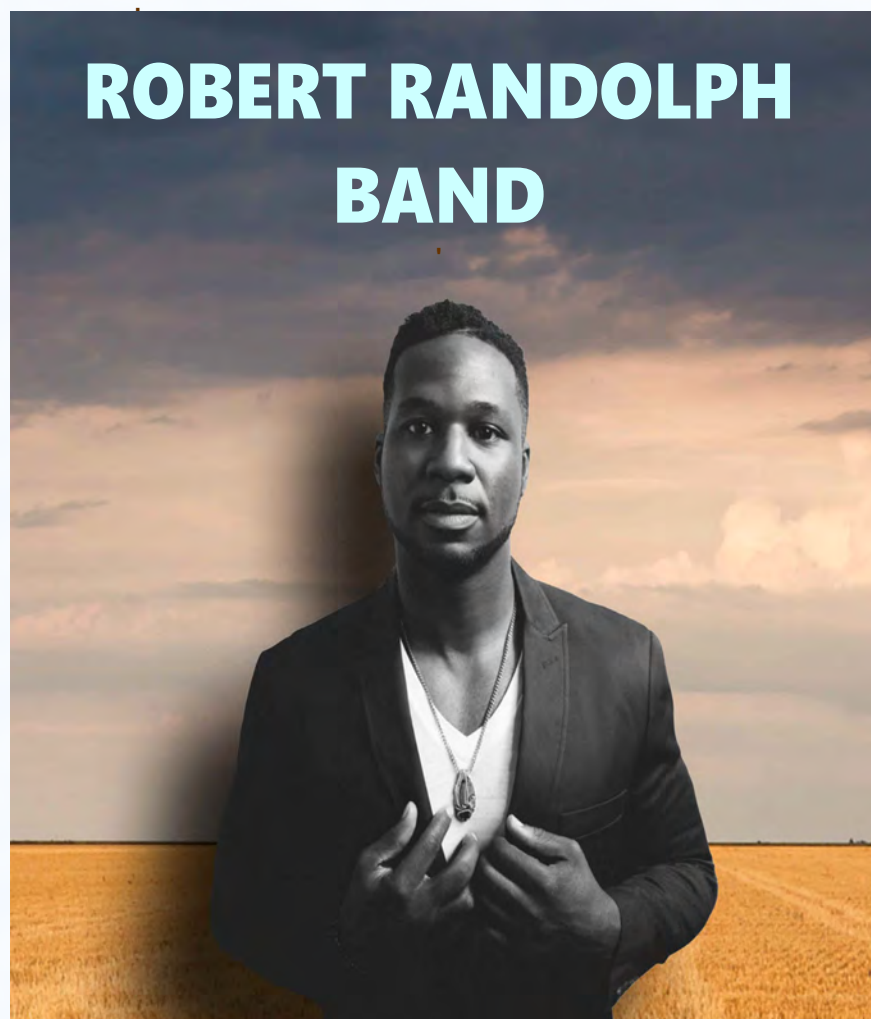
FESTIVAL GUIDE

Star Power Lights Up Spa City's Year-End Showcase



JOAN OSBORNE

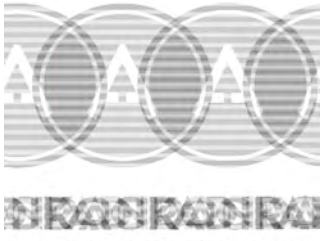
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Headline Acts

Still Not Playing it Safe: Joan Osborne Carries On

Gracing the Fest's Big Stage with Full Band

Since she broke through with the acclaimed multi-platinum *Relish* and its touchstone mega-smash “One of Us,” this seven-time Grammy nominee has never played it safe.

Osborne has followed her restless musical heart, exploring a diverse range of genres: pop rock, soul, R&B, blues, roots rock, gospel, funk, western country and even tours with various Grateful Dead offshoots – all of which can be heard on her latest release, *Trouble and Strife*.

“For a lot of the record, we were going for a ‘70s radio vibe,” says Osborne. As for the lyrics, the eleven songs “are the most political I’ve ever written,” she conveys of her first album of originals since 2014’s confessional *Love and Hate*.

Osborne also produced the album, recorded in her Brooklyn basement studio and released on her own label, Womanly Hips.

The result is a Trojan horse of a record – music that is energizing, melodic, and hummable, with lyrics that call out the corrupt, the despicable and the destructive.



It’s been quite the journey since the woman AllMusic.com declared “*the most gifted vocalist of her generation*” moved from small-town Kentucky to attend NYU film school in the 1980s. Osborne’s astounding voice drew attention when she joined with the fun times at open mic nights in downtown clubs, which eventually led to 1995’s *Relish*, rightfully tagged as “*one the best major label debuts of the 90’s*”.

**“Where critical consensus, popular approval
and enduring appeal unite”**

(American Songwriter)

Joining Ms Osborne on stage at the Saratoga New Year's Fest will be a superb *musicians' musicians* type of full band that includes several musicians who played on her very popular *Songs of Bob Dylan* LP: guitarists Jack Petruzzelli, Nels Cline, and Andrew Carillo, keyboardist Keith Cotton, bassist Richard Hammond and drummer Aaron Comess.

Joan Osborne & Friends: 9PM in the City Center Ballroom

Saratoga New Year's Fest

Robert Randolph Set to Raise Spa City Center Roof

Pedal Steel Master Predicts Dance Party Breakout

Robert Randolph first gained widespread national attention with the release of his band's debut album, *Live at the Wetlands* in 2002. That was followed with three popular studio recordings over the next eight years; which, together with tireless touring and unforgettable performances at such festivals as Bonnaroo, Austin City Limits, and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, won them a very passionate fan base.

Randolph’s unprecedented prowess on his instrument garnered him a spot on Rolling Stone’s “*100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time*” list, and also gained the attention of artists like Eric Clapton, Dave Matthews, The Roots, and Jack White, who have since collaborated with Randolph on stage and in the studio. In sum, he has accumulated ten Grammy nominations along the way and preformed in front of millions worldwide.



Randolph has gospel roots having been trained on the pedal steel guitar in the House of God Church and famously makes prominent use of that unique instrument.

His concerts are known for their lively stage performances, with Randolph content to let the rest of the band play on while he moves about the stage. Dance is an integral part of the concerts. During "Shake Your Hips", the audience is encouraged to dance and perform onstage.

“One of the most unique and incredible performers”

(Austin City Limits)

Sports fans recognize the rocker from seeing and hearing him on NBA, WNBA and NHL games and (currently) performing the lead-in theme song on the weekly Thursday Night Football broadcasts.

Hold on to your hats and you might not even need that seat you paid for: the Robert Randolph Band is in the house!

The Robert Randolph Band: 7PM in the City Center Ballroom

Performer Bios

Saratoga New Year's Fest

TOUBAB KREWE

West African - Rock Fusion



Blending Malian, American, jam and Dirty South influences into a sound their own, Toubab Krewe has set a new standard for fusing rock and West African music. When heard live, the instrumental powerhouse delivers an exciting sonic Pangaea.

It's near impossible to put them into a box; taking just a few moments to realize in a very palpable way that one is face-to-face with originals who recognizes no borders in a march towards a unique, globally switched-on sound.

While carrying clear echoes of the African greats, Toubab carves new trails honoring the originators.

Hailing from Asheville, NC, the band has toured the world. Their international brand of music is a reflection of their well traveled lives and dedication to craft.

"An experiment in Afro-California fusion." (Boston Herald)

"A futuristic, psychedelic, neo-griot frenzy." (Village Voice)

"Where Ali Farka Toure and Led Zeppelin meet." (Seven Days)

GA -20

Electric Blues

GA-20 is clearly on to something big.

It's called a new traditional blues revival.

This dynamic, throwback blues trio is a disciples of the spot where traditional blues, country and rock & roll intersect.

"We make records we'd want to listen to," says founder Matt Stubbs. "It's our take on the song-based electric blues we love."



Stubbs, Pat Faherty and Tim Carman have been at the forefront of this traditional blues revival since first forming in '18 in Boston. It's no wonder they skyrocketed to the top of the Billboard Charts and nabbed a BMA 'Best Of' award.

GA-20 drew a large following, with its debut, *Lonely Soul*, in 2019 in the #2 position on the *Billboard* Blues Chart. Their 2020 EP *Live Vol. 1*, debuted at #1.

With 2021's *Try It...You Might Like It!*, the band resurrected and reinvented the raw and dirty blues music of the late six-fingered slide guitar Chicago legend, Hound Dog Taylor.

TRACY BONHAM

Alt-Rock

The two-time Grammy nominee is a classically trained violinist, pianist, and vocalist turned rock singer-songwriter. Her debut, *The Burdens of Being Upright*, achieved Gold status, spawning the chart-topping hit "Mother Mother" which has remained a powerful anthem for disenfranchised youth all over the world.

More recently, Ms Bonham's 2017 *Modern Burdens* made *Rolling Stone's* Top 50 Albums for that year.

Taking action during the quarantine, Tracy uncovered finished recordings for what would become an entirely new endeavor called Melodeon Music House, pointing toward a younger audience who she lovingly calls her "young music enthusiasts." This new enterprise combines her original material with original music education curriculums inspired by School House Rock, Electric Company, and Sesame Street.

Family-friendly, bring the kids as she appears at the Fest in a trio format early in the evening, immediately after the big time fireworks.



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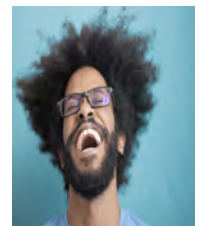
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Performer Bios

WARD HAYDEN AND THE OUTLIERS

Traditional / Outlaw Country



For two-plus decades, Ward and pals have offered a distinctive take on C&W with a rocking kick to the top of the Boston scene and a very thriving, critically-acclaimed and highly-awarded career across the US and Europe.

With their ninth LP, *South Shore*, WH&TO bring their “*amber-soaked melodies, tight musicianship, and casual elegance*” all back home, literally and spiritually.

They’ve won seven Boston Music Awards (including Act of the Year), the French Music Awards crowned them Artist of the Year, plus an AMA nomination for the same. They are regulars on the charts and SiriusXM’s Outlaw Country channel.

THE NTH POWER

Inspirational Soul-Rock

Proving that soul music can be exponentially greater than the sum of its parts, The Nth Power is on a mission to share the light.

The four year-old trio hails from diverse musical backgrounds, races and creeds. Female powerhouse Nikki Glaspie was Beyoncé’s world-touring drummer for five years before joining Dumpstaphunk. Bassist Nate Edgar of John Browns Body perfectly compliments singer and guitarist Nick Cassarino of the Jennifer Hartswick Band.

They maintain New Orleans as their spiritual home, and the celebratory essence of that city’s music culture is audible in each performance. Simply put, there is something pretty magical happening in this band, and they’re just getting started.

DJ LOGIC

Pioneering Turntablist DJ

As one of the world’s most accomplished turntablists, DJ Logic is widely credited for introducing jazz into the hip-hop realm.

Since his emergence in the early nineties amidst the Bronx scene, the NYC based deejay has amassed a veritable mountain of collaborations. DJ Logic and his role as an electronic-music ambassador keeps him at the top of his game.



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“*Adventurous instrumental music that feels vital and alive*” (Glide)



HALFSTEP

Dead & More

Long time Grateful Dead act returns to the Fest, this year with a *Positively* spin reflecting the addition of tunes by Dylan, The Band and others to the mix.

But don't fret, there will be plenty enough of the 'Good Ole'tunes to keep the Jam & Groove Room rolling'.



FEST IRISH PUB

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MAGGIE'S CLAN

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The Fest Country Room rolls out the dance floor for Kevin's posse to do their thing and enjoy a night of fun, dancing to his curated tunes and a national band.

Special Guests

“Spiritual Descendants of The Band”

Headlining the Saturday Night Fest Kick-Off Show



The Weight Band’s origins are tied to Woodstock, NY and one of its most famous inhabitants, The Band. Native son Jim Weider served as that legendary Hall of Famers' lead guitarist from 1985-2000, following Robbie Robertson’s *Last Waltz* departure. In the new century, that connection continued as Weider toured with fellow Band alums Rick Danko and Levon Helm, eventually joining the latter's triumphant Dirt Farmer/Midnight Ramble-era comeback ensemble.

The first version of The Weight Band formed shortly after Helm's passing, playing mainly Band tunes in a semi-tribute format. After several years, the group shifted to their originals, which have been met with great acclaim from both critics and fans, as seen by the reaction to the latest release *World Gone Mad*. Weider – dubbed the Master of the Tleecaster – is joined onstage by Michael Bram (Jason Mraz, Willie Nelson), Brian Mitchell (Midnight Ramble, Bob Dylan), Matt Zeiner (Dickey Betts) and Albert Rogers (Albert Lee).

Gibson Brothers: Bluegrass Superstars

11x Int'l Bluegrass Awards Winners



Bluegrass superstars (as per NY Times) are a late-in-life success story; having taken the slow burn route from their Northern NYS homes to (eventually) national and international recognition as the cream of the traditional bluegrass crop.

In addition to those eleven IBMA statues (which include 2x Entertainers of the Year), the Gibsons have also claimed six Bluegrass Preservation nods given to their deep library of 19 albums. Countless high recording guest appearances and performances in major venues contribute to their still-growing legacy.



Dogs in a Pile: By Special Arrangement

Very Limited Tix Available

The Dogs emerge from festival season as the hottest jam band in the US Under special arrangement with co-host Putnam Place, the Fest is allocated 200 spaces for their New Year's Eve (only) show there. 150 of our tix will be sold in advance, labeled as a Dogs/Fest Badge bundle and will guarantee admission to Dogs. The remaining 50 Door entries will be held for regular Fest badge holders to walk in/out. There will likely be a line for those in/out badge holders as this show will sell out very, very early.

Saratoga New Year's Fest

LOCALS LOVE

In a show of support for area performers, we have placed ten acts into smaller venues around downtown; many of them playing in the afternoon time periods. The emphasis on their *originals* material.

So come on up early, make a full day out of it!

Ragged Company @ Quarters
Erin Powers @ Overland + The Coat Room
Will Pedicone @ Impressions
Jeff Brisbin @ Holiday Inn
Maurizzio & Kaos @ Franklin Square Market
Patrick Wisdom Stewart @ Baileys
Shine On @ Embassy Suites
Pete Pashoukas @ Sixth Generation Strings
Double Barreled @ Nashville of Saratoga
Kristian Montgomery @ Tap & Barrel

SO HOW DOES ALL THIS WORK?

(again...)



This is a Fest Badge

Purchase one (cheap!) and you have General Admission entry to any and all shows. Flash it and walk in to any of the 20+ venues x 3 nights.

Some shows may be so crowded that you will need to stand. A few might be so crowded that the venue is at capacity, in which case you can opt to wait until someone leaves.

For an few extra \$, you can guaranteed both entry and a seat at the Headline Show (Randolph & Osborne). There is also an option to guarantee entry to the Dogs in a Pile show at Putnam Place (but those are VERY limited).

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Susan Robbins is an actor, artist, producer and director, and she found one of her passions in the story of Lee Shaw, a local music legend. I had a chance to reach out to her. Now you do too.

RRX: You directed the film *88 Keys*, which is about Lee Shaw, the Queen of Albany Jazz. Not everybody knows this story, which I imagine presents a unique challenge when it comes to research in a local sense. Did you have a fully fleshed out Lee Shaw to work with directing, or were there holes the cast had to make up for?

SR: Lee had a long history with much information and many photos

detailing her entire life story. It would have been good to have more video from her early career. But we had her other band members from the present and past to interview as well as Lee herself. At first Lee only wanted to share the high lights of her career. But after speaking with her on many occasions she finally opened up and shared more of the real life events and struggles of her musical career.

RRX: The common understanding of directors is the work you do with actors. But there's more involved, isn't there? Before the scene and after the scene, what things are on a director to oversee? Is it everything? And since

you're a filmmaker also, are there off-scene director roles not covered by the filmmaker?

SR: I was the one who approached Lee about making a film about her life. Taking on the project meant I had to handle everything, hire all the crew for filming and do the producing until I found a co-producer. I also hired the editors and worked with them in the editing room. I sourced and conducted all the interviews for the film. Since the film is a documentary and it was my project I became the director by default. Lee was only going to trust me for the interviews. I decided who would be interviewed for the film. I directed the whole

project from start to finish. I wore many hats. Which is very different from a director hired to direct a narrative film. I did not direct professional actors. I interviewed her band members, professionals in the music industry and her friends.

RRX: There are a lot of indie filmmakers in the area that have done some pretty stunning work. I've noticed that a lot of what gets filmed here is sort of bizarre, like horror sci-fi comedies, vampire grit, superhero inspired tragic dramas. What kind of film would you like to do here if a couple million fell in your hand tomorrow?

SR: Great question. I'd like to make

a narrative film. I like true life stories that depict historical events. Events that have been forgotten or lost but have made a big impact. I am working on a project of this nature presently.

RRX: People put the sword of Damocles on directors, and you think about the Marvel/DC directors, and they're like gods to the fandom. But there are writers too that get the silent service. Good writing makes good stories, right? But bad writing... would you rather have good writing and bad actors or bad writing and good actors?

SR: Ok this is actually a tough question. But the bottom line is you want to have good writing. If you don't have good writing then you don't have a project that will go anywhere. So my answer would be good writing and bad acting. By the way, it's not easy to act out bad writing. You also said bad actors. You did not say if they were name actors or not. Having a name actor or known stars in your film project makes all the difference in the world. People will go see a bad film if they know and like the actors in the film. But if the writing is really bad the word gets out and even with stars in your film you will not get an audience. The story and the writing needs to be good.

RRX: When a director has to work with an actor, I imagine that things can get difficult. It's like a writer and an editor, sometimes a hated, but necessary, relationship. An editor, and a director, have to take the good and make the better. Are there good ways to bring the criticism that you need for top work?

SR: There are so many stages a project has to go through to get to production and then post production. Changes and revisions happen all along the way. You have to have a thick skin to make a film and be ready for criticism and constant changes from start to finish.

Which means you have to bend, be willing to listen and go with changes that need to happen. My best answer for top work happens in the final stages in

the editing room! Also to answer this question I have to break down everyone's roles. First you have a script from the writers, (The editor is the last person who edits the finished film making, so the editor is not going to be going over the script.) The final script is decided on by the writers and producers. Changes to the script are made well ahead of filming. Sometimes changes to the script are requested by the director or actors. If their requests are met depends on much. It's important to have a director who is an "actor's director". With good understanding between the director and the actors you are going to get great work. They are going to give and take and trust each other, which makes for good work. Then you have to trust your editor, because they make the magic happen. Doesn't mean you can't question their choices. But you have to instinctively trust that they know best!

RRX: In addition to being a filmmaker and a director, you're also an actor and artist, so you've been on every side of the director's chair. Do you prefer taking on the role of director or the role of actor? Are there certain projects that would pique your curiosity one way or the other?

SR: I was an artist first and foremost before I got into acting or filmmaking. As an artist you see the whole picture and the overall project. Artists are also the behind the scenes people. So I have to say I prefer the role of filmmaker/producer. I do enjoy directing in the sense of the overall film project. But if I am able to make a narrative film in the future I will hire a director other than myself. Just as I would hire actors other than myself. Making a film you want a team who are professionals at their individual jobs.

I am always fascinated by musicians and their life stories. I think I would enjoy doing the life history of more musicians. Not only is their background interesting, but you get to hear great music also.



2023/24 SEASON

DECEMBER 2023

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>December 1st, 2023 SAINTS IN THE CITY <i>The Bruce Springsteen Live Experience</i></p> <p>Doors: 7:30pm Showtime: 8pm Early Bird - \$20.00 Day Of Show - \$25.00</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>December 21st, 2023 THE MATT NIEDBALSKI TRIO <i>ft. Nate Giroux, Tyler Giroux & Steven Kirsty</i></p> <p>Doors: 7pm Showtime: 7:30pm General Admission - \$10.00</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>December 2nd, 2023 HONEYSUCKLE <i>Americana</i></p> <p>Doors: 7:30pm Showtime: 8pm Early Bird - \$13.00 Day Of Show - \$18.00</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>December 31st, 2023 NYE DINNER & COMEDY SHOW <i>Acclaimed Comedian, Tony Deyo</i></p> <p>3-Course Prix Fixe Menu Champagne Greeting Station Doors: 6pm Dinner: 7pm Showtime: 8pm Ticket Price: \$99.00</p> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>December 7th, 2023 FORT VINE <i>Indie-Folk</i></p> <p>Doors: 6:30pm Showtime: 7pm General Admission - \$10.00</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>December 14th, 2023 CAITY & THE GALLAGHERS <i>Indie-Folk / Singer-Songwriter</i></p> <p>Doors: 7pm Showtime: 7:30pm Early Bird - \$10.00 Day Of Show - \$15.00</p> </div> </div>



Honeysuckle

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Prog Digest

BY KLYDE KADIDDLEHUMPER

Howdy folks and Happy Whatever Holiday you want to celebrate time.

For all of you who are now saying – Hey Klyde – why are you being politically correct? Well, it is really very simple. At any given time in this household, we will be entertaining just about every religious or not people on the planet. Heck, I could use an entire article space just with the salutation. I would get in huge Dutch if I were, for example, forget the Druids – a dear, departed friend registered with the military as Druid, Reformed as he was not a member of a traditional organized religion. And, since many of the traditions we have come from far earlier times – it only seems fair.

Now – if you read my little missive in the Thanksgiving insert in the Times Union (and if you did not, shame on you. Go to Radioradiox.com and check out the digital version online), we talked a bit about Christmas Music and, in particular, the John Waters Christmas Album. This is just scratching the surface.

Christmas music does not start in the Kadiddlehumper household until after Thanksgiving – and, usually, after Dec. 1. This is a NO Mariah Carey Zone. So, what do you listen to, Klyde?

Let's start at the beginning. Handel's Messiah – preferably a live performance with a big pro choir. Many of the German classics and other materials of the like. It was a jazz and classical home I grew up in – and still favourites.

Beyond that – well....here are the items I will suggest to you that are on the super-duper hit list.

For your light, background listening – Manheim Steamroller. I know, I know. The reasoning is simple. You don't have to think. There is nothing about it that

will make your brain explode. Nice rhythms, nice sounds, and festive enough to convey the season. Give Fresh Aire Christmas (1, 2, 3,4.....) and tell me it does not make a soothing backdrop.

Next up on the list – an all time favourite here – Jackie Gleason. For those of you too young to know, not only was the Ralph Kramden on the Honeymooners, Fats in The Hustler and Buford T. Justice in the Smokey and the Bandit movies, he was also one of the great orchestral arrangers of all time. Lush. Smooth. Just fantastic. Again – give it a rip.

Then, the modern classics – Brian Setzer, Miss Sharon Jones, The Tower of Power. There are more, however, these or the top of the heap along with a few others. Oh, and don't forget Bing (preferably with Bowie).

What are the big guns? The Rat Pack. Nothing says Christmas like Frank, Dino and Sammy. You can throw in Peter Lawford if you like, but he's not on the top of the list. If it's a party – it's gotta be these guys. I dare say, they are the true wise men of the holiday season. Not a progressive note in the bunch – unless you consider that Sammy was Franks dear friend, and at a time Sammy was not welcome in certain places – Frank made it clear – No Sammy – No Frank.

Isn't that really the spirit of Christmas? Standing up for what you believe in. Taking a stand when your real friends are in a pinch.

All the Black Friday, buy this, buy that has, perhaps, caused up to forget. Take a step back and maybe think of a friend who could use a hug and a place to join in for dinner. Adopt a family in need so they know someone is thinking of them. Spread some happiness where

ever you can.

This space is usually full of irreverent poppycock – full of the sound and the fury and signifying nothing.

From time to time – reality will seep

in. This is the day.

Besides, what's so funny 'bout peace, love and understanding?

Until next time.

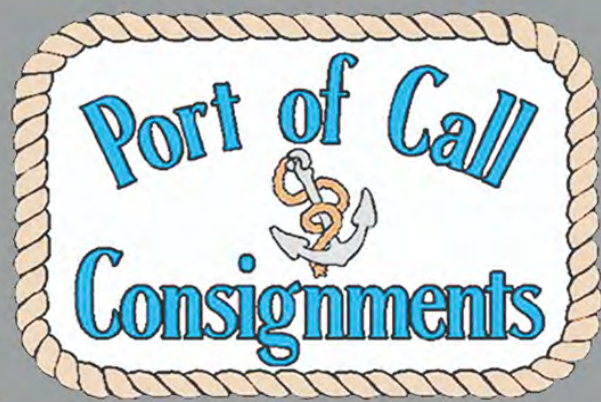
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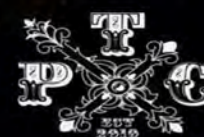


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The Heights

BY JOE BARNA

I'd like to propose a toast...

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Why am I featuring my hometown of Troy, NY in this month's article? Come along, let's take a little walk together.....

Too often those who reside in any particular community for a prolonged period can take for granted the vast rewards that exist before their own eyes. They become complacent, choosing to remain home rather than to continue exploring all that lay right before them. Excuses become their drug of choice, continually coming up with explanations as to why they no longer engage. In my humble opinion, I view these acts as nothing less than self-inflicted wounds that limit the potential growth and progress of one's own community.

As was stated in my November article, when I moved back to Troy from Manhattan in August of 2015 there were NO music venues. Troy was a city facing artistic decline in regards to the live performing arts. It was sad...How could anyone want to exist in an environment where music wasn't resonating freely throughout the airways of the streets? Why would any musician want to wake up morning after morning in a place where sound vibrations from

instruments being lovingly manipulated by the hands of dedicated performers wasn't an option readily accessible within a small walk forward from their doorsteps? Who could possibly be inspired by a city whose store fronts closed their doors by 5pm and the only options were to get intoxicated at a local late night pub, with a juke-box saturated with the memories of days gone by?

NOT ME, NOT NOW, NOT EVER.....

So, what does one do when faced with this scenario? I get my ass out of the house and make things happen.

It all started at Lucas Confectionery, located at 12 2nd Street, Troy, NY. Owned and operated by Vic Christopher, I was afforded my first opportunity to help lead the way in bringing live music back into the clubs of Troy, NY, where it belongs. Starting out as a Thursday night jazz showcase and morphing into what would later become the Monday Night Jazz Jam, we were able to converge on the beginning of what would emerge as the catalyst for instigating a renaissance of live music in this historic city on the Hudson.

Forward 8 years later...We now have venues and live performances 7 nights a week throughout Troy. Some of the spaces you can look forward to hearing your favorite artists are Twisted Fiddler, 518 Craft, No Fun, The Ruck, Alias Coffee Roasters, Browns, Tatu Tacos & Tequila, McAddy's Pub, Hanger On The Hudson and more. Who could have envisioned that Troy would

eventually play host to the region's top artists, touring musicians and creative forces from around the country? Not to mention we also play host to larger venues Troy Music Hall and EMPAC. It's a blessing to have been an important witness to the maturing and emerging live music scene in Troy, NY. The concerns I once internalized back in 2015 have been immobilized, if not terminated completely. I'm proud of this city, its resilience, soul, identity and those who had the vision, as well as courage, to continue moving forward, no matter the obstacles.

Now, it would be irresponsible of me not to acknowledge those brave business owners who weathered many a storm in hopes of returning Troy to its former glory. I'd like to publicly thank Vic Christopher, Hernan Lopez, Jeremy Cowan, Tim Taney, Rob Tritto, David Gardell, Susie Carrk, August Rosa, Jennifer Spaulding, Kareem NeJame and all other small business owners who have the vision and determination to see through all adversity in bringing our tiny gem of a city to prominence once again. We here in the Capital Region salute you.

If you haven't taken the time to explore Troy, I implore you to let go of any preconceived notions you may have and open yourselves up to possibility. Whether your passion is food, architecture, performing arts, clothing, craft beer, good conversation or otherwise, Troy has something for everyone. An inclusive city, it opens doors to knowledge,

relationships, experiences and memories not found in many areas of our humble earth. The vast opportunities presented will inspire the soul and provoke a level of spontaneity that may be lying dormant in your being. If given the chance you just might impress yourself by what you've been missing.

SPECIAL SHOUT OUT.....

If you are reading this article and feel enriched by what it offers, I'd like you to please take a moment and also raise your glasses to those who are making this publication possible. Cheers to Art Fredette and his entire team of magical minds who month after month bring the community a comprehensive collection of information, informing as to the happenings transpiring right here in the capital region. These brave individuals work tirelessly to present stories they believe are engaging, uplifting and worthy of print. Each contributor possesses a unique disposition and offers perspectives through a lens richly their own. I'm beyond humbled to be a part of Xperience Monthly and do not take my inclusion lightly. When asked to be a contributor back in December of 2022 I was both excited and moved to even be considered. It has been an honor to be associated with everyone on staff at Xperience and I consider each of them my family. Thank You for having me.

Warmest Regards,
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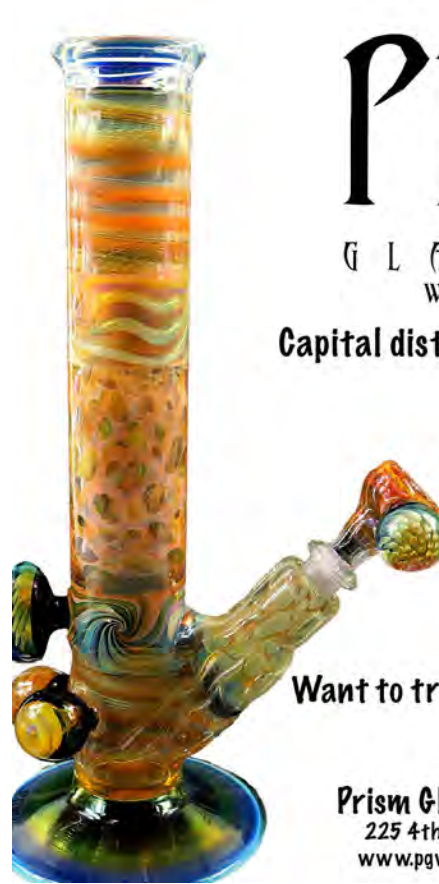
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Wrap-Up

2023 Wrap Up or 'Hey, What The Hell Was That Song?' BY JOHNNY MYSTERY

Yeah, so as I write these words, a cold wind is blowing, and The Beatles and The Stones are riding high on the pop charts. Makes me wonder what Gerry and The Pacemakers are doing these days. Really tough, at this point I'm not telling you something you don't already know but as we go further into this very unremarkable century we live in, things continue to get stranger. I mean in every aspect. The fact is, having two 60-year-old bands with new music in the charts, seems like a sad comment on everything else getting played in the hot 100. Either that or the Baby Boomers just have more disposable income or have gotten more adept to finding and downloading music for free.

Nevertheless, here are some noteworthy songs I've uncovered this year, new or otherwise, that deserve your attention. They certainly got mine.

The 5678's- Batman/You May Dream- These ladies from Tokyo never disappoint me. We were lucky enough to have them playing in Troy over the Summer. I didn't get to see them but from all accounts, they did a spectacular show. I'm assuming Batman is the A side of this 45. You know the song; you love the song. It sounds just as you'd expect it to sound, with a bit of their own spin. Some interesting, intertwined melodies and really fun vocals. Easy to sing along with as the only lyric is "Batman." "You May Dream" is a ballad of sorts and quite different from what they normally play. The lyrics are sung in their native Japanese but even if you don't understand the words you will enjoy! Get this record while it's relatively cheap. Once the secondary market gets it, you'll be blowing the grocery money.

The Amplifier Heads- When We Go Home Again- Now you might think with a name like The Amplifier Heads, they

would sound like Deep Purple. Nothing could be further from the truth. These guys sound like a cross between R.E.M. and Dumptruck, with a bit of Camper Van Beethoven. In other words, we are talking some serious 80's, 90's alternative here and it's done with taste. It's all about going back to your hometown the way it used to be and it's happy!! My only complaint is that it's only a bit over two minutes. Songs this great need to be a little longer. This sounds like a summer day.

Justine And The Unclean-The Signal Light- This song will unfortunately be one of the last efforts we'll hear from this band. Their leader and lead vocalist, Justine Covault, passed away suddenly from natural causes this spring. Justine was also the owner of Red On Red Records in Boston. This is a great label which won't continue either. The Swedish band, Stupidity, have several releases on Red On Red as well as many others. Signal Light got some good airplay on the indie shows. I love the surfy, vibrato guitar line that runs through this rocker and this band and label will be missed.

The Cherry Drops- Magically Delicious- From the West Coast comes The Cherry Drops and this tune is as 1967 psychedelic as you can get in our time. Another big player on indie radio and for good reason. This ain't no Lucky Charms either. It's got a catchy melody, clean guitar all the way through, played masterfully. Listen to that mellow Farfisa organ keeping it all glued together. It's got hooks galore and even more. It's one of my favorite records this year. Look for it and I bet you can't listen just once.

The Headless Horseman- Can't Help But Shake- These guys are the real deal and this is the title track from what might be their only album. I know

practically zilch about them, probably because they are long gone as this record is from 1988. How did I miss this anyway? It's bluesy garage at its finest. Snooty vocals, great songs and guitar driven melodies. In fact, I highly recommend the entire album. They go from sounding like The Dave Clark Five to Jefferson Airplane in a snap. Quick songs and to the point are the way rock should be and these boys follow it to a T...

The Circulators-Can't Get My Way- This seems to be a new release and it looks like it's a cassette. It's so obvious these guys are Dead Boys fans and it's like 1977 all over again. I ain't complaining, are you? There should be a band like this in every town and they should be playing every weekend in a club that has a men's room

like CBGB's. I have yet to find this release but believe me I will!!

Just a bit off subject before we finish up here. Be on the lookout for Syracuse band 145 to come back into town sometime soon. Led by guitarist Paul Armstrong from the legendary band The Flashcubes, they are old school punk and not ashamed about it one bit. As if they should be in the first place. We got to share the stage with them twice this year and if I got anything to say about it, we'll play with them again. Any band that kicks off their set with "God Save The Queen" and ends it with "Chinese Rocks" is in my good graces forever!

So, let's look forward to 2024. Have the greatest holiday ever and give the gift of music this year...

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Observations and Ramblings from a Cranky Old Guy

BY JEFF SPAULDING

This is a holiday story, with plot twists and turns. To begin with, I am a huge believer in fate, the concept that things are not always random, and perhaps our lives are pre-determined.

Thanksgiving weekend 1969. My father, mother and I were living in Loudonville. I was 13. My parents decided to travel to New Jersey for the weekend to visit my aunt (mom's sister) and her very large family. Coming were my sister, 16 years older than me, and her husband of about 4 years. He was a great guy, more like a big brother to me. When we left, no one knew it would be the last adventure as a family.

Down to Jersey for a wonderful day. Despite the amazing family time, it was spoiled by my sister, who got stinking drunk and got into a knock down dragged-out fight with her husband. Unfortunately, my sister was an alcoholic, among other things, it was not the first time we saw this behavior, nor was it the last.

Things calmed down, the next day back to the 518. That was Friday. The next day brought a major FU to the family.

Saturday afternoon, my dad (a two pack a day Camel smoker, a diabetic, and someone who had been in ill health his entire life) suddenly grabbed his chest. Mom calls for an ambulance and to the ER we go. My sister and her husband met us there. We were told my father had a big heart attack. By late afternoon the doctors told us he was in Intensive Care, but he was stable so we

should go home and get some rest. I went to see him, and he said, "I'm doing ok Pal" (that was his name for me, oddly I call my grandsons by that name).

We went home to chill, about two hours later we got the call, get here now.

We didn't make it, he had a series of heart attacks in a row, and they couldn't stop them. At 54-56 years old (questionable records), my father was dead.

Fast forward to Christmas Eve that same year. There was no tree or decorations, naturally, but my mother got me a couple of presents, because that's what mothers do. Still reeling from the loss of the patriarch of the family, my brother-in-law was most affected. He started to drink, really drink, something you really shouldn't do after such a loss. The death hit him hard, and this mountain of a man had a breakdown, shaking and in tears. He grabs the car keys, barges out the door and yells "I'm going to see Pop." He takes off like a bat out of hell, and in 1969, with the lack of technology as it was, we had no idea how to find him. We feared the worst.

Christmas morning, we found his car in the driveway. He's hungover as hell, but safe. He and my sister make up as it were, we all thank God, and the two of them go home. This is where fate comes in. Shortly after Christmas, my sister announces she is pregnant, and come August (gee, isn't that like nine months from Christmas?), their son, my new nephew, Scott is born. In

my heart I believe that happened for a reason, it happened for a purpose, it happened because the brother-in-law didn't wrap up his present to my sister that night. But that's not the end of this story.

A few years ago, I was contacted by someone claiming to be my nephew Scott, now in his late 40's, who was playing on Ancestry.com to connect the dots to the family. After some verification emails back and forth, I was convinced after all this time, he was the real deal (we all lost track of each

other over the years, by this time, my mom, and Scott's parents were all dead.) We arranged to meet, and had a tremendous time, seeing Scott, his wife, and a second cousin I didn't know existed. What makes this very special to me is that I got MY family back, and I forgot what I missed after decades. I am whole again, I guess Peaches and Herb were right after all.

Be hearing you.

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