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July 2024
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ART MUSIC CULTURE

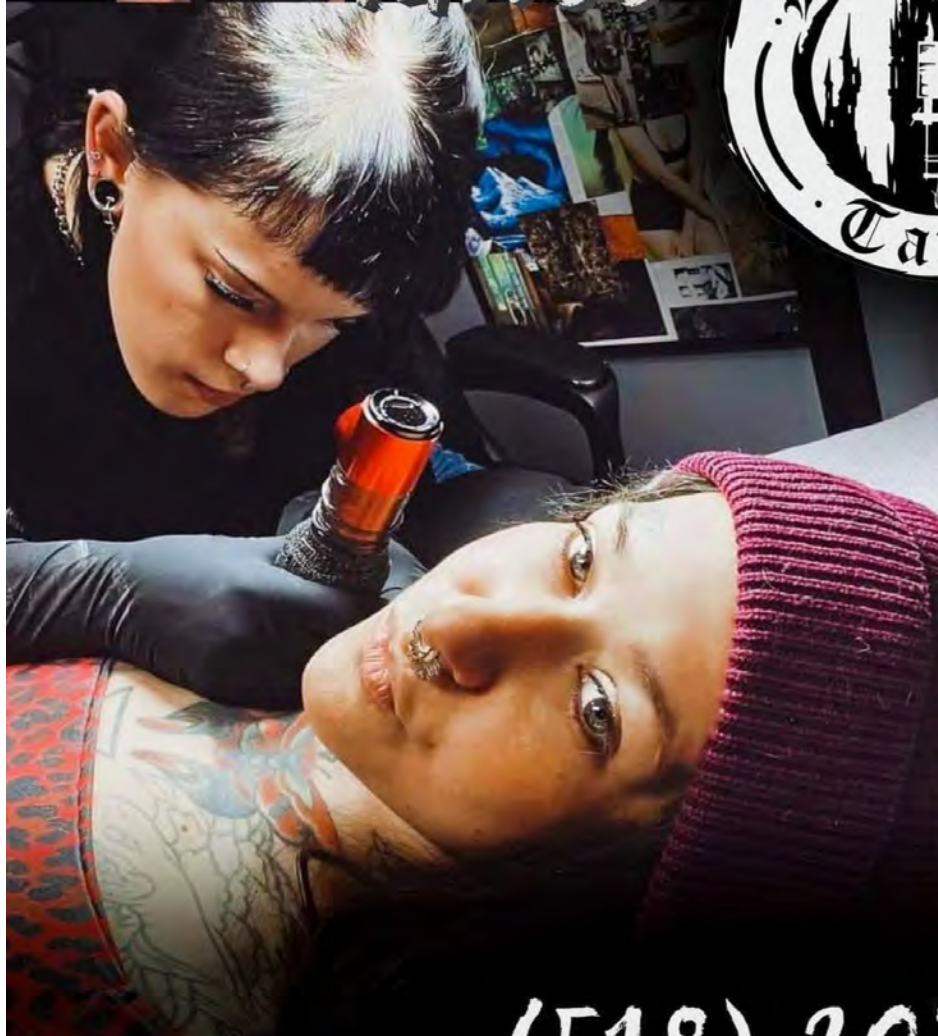
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BY ROB SMITTIX

Guitar legend explains why it's called a 'black belt.'

Pat Travers.
Photo from Wikipedia

RRX: So, how are you doing?

PT: Pretty good.

RRX: We've got you coming in on July 27 for the Uncle Sam Jam in Powers Park. You've played Troy in the past. My boss (Art Frette) used to own a club called Positively Fourth Street and he had you there a couple of times. He said that you were a really nice guy and everyone that I've talked to that has met you over the years has pretty much said the same thing. So then it gets me thinking because people have called you a Canadian national treasure. Like you're right up there with Celine Dion.

PT: I like that. That's ok. I'll take it. It's kind of weird now. So, obviously, you know, I was born in Canada and lived there until I was 21. But I spent most of my life in the US now. So it's funny. I don't really feel like a Canadian. I don't know exactly what that means. It's just where I'm from, you know? I just started my journey there.

RRX: Right? Canada doesn't

wanna let you go. I used to go into the diners in Canada and they'd always have pictures of Celine Dion on the wall. But I'm thinking maybe they should throw some Pat Travers photos up there too.

PT: No, no, I don't think so but that's ok. We still play there. I'm sure I'll do some shows up there this summer. So, yeah.

RRX: But you've also been called a guitar god as well. And, I mean, both of those things set the bar really high, right? But what about Pat Travers the regular guy?

PT: Well, that's me most of the time. It's strange as far as the guitar goes, you know? It's one of the things I play and do. But there's a whole lot we're doing right now. We're working on some new material. We're gonna record another album here sometime. So most of the time I'm just kind of sitting around thinking about it.

I won't even have a guitar on and then when I get something in my head, I'll gr-

ab the guitar and start figuring it all out.

RRX: Are you currently on tour?

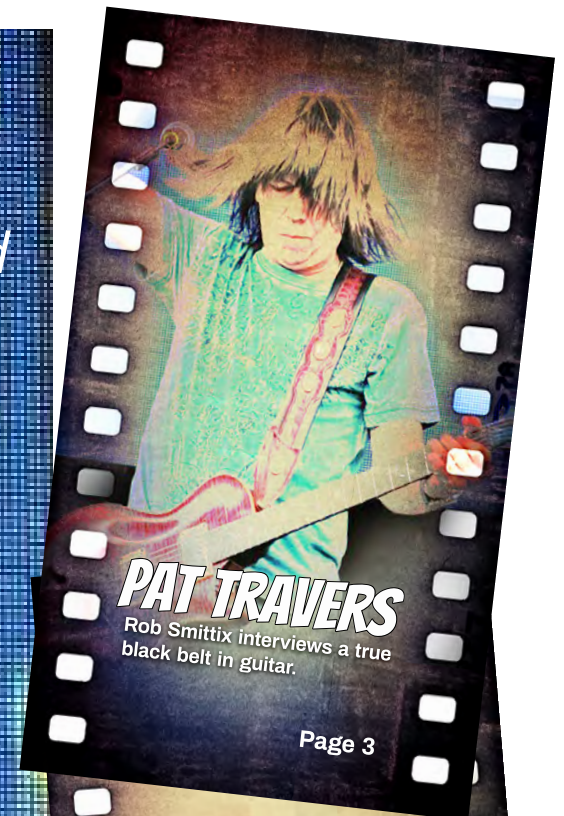
PT: We're just starting to get busy now. We did a show down here in Florida last weekend and we've got a couple more coming up and then we start heading out. So we'll be all over the place in the next four months.

RRX: How do you think touring in 2024 is different than what it used to be for you?

PT: Well of course I've been everywhere now. So, you know it's not as shiny as it used to be.

RRX: Right.

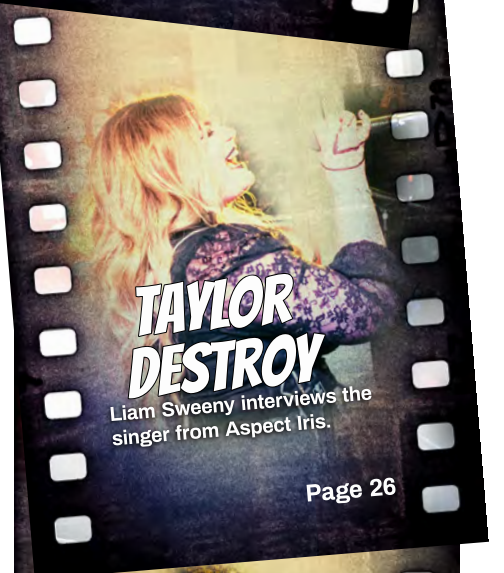
PT: Everything's more difficult now, you know? There's a lot more people traveling, so if you gotta fly, it's a pain in the ass and if you have to drive, it's a pain in the ass. So that part I definitely do not enjoy. And the whole having to stay in a hotel room too, that kind of drives me up the wall. But I still love playing and I got such a great band that it's fun once we're playing, it's the other 22 hours of the day that ... you know?



PAT TRAVERS

Rob Smittix interviews a true black belt in guitar.

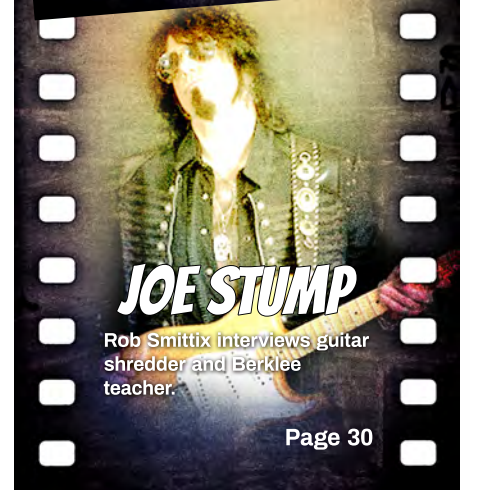
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Pat Travers. Photo from website.

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RRX: Absolutely. Who is in the band now?

PT: I've got David Pastorius on bass guitar and Alex Petrosky on drums; he's incredible but he's mostly just gonna be playing with us in the studio this year because he's got family issue complications. We're gonna have a guy named Tommy Craig play (drums) with us and he's played with me before for a number of years. So yeah, that's all gonna work out.

RRX: Now, I found an interesting factoid about you online which I thought was pretty cool. I love to find out things that people don't really commonly know about people and it looks like from what I could tell you have a black belt.

PT: Yes I do. Yeah, I'm actually a third-degree black belt and I'm gonna get my fourth degree once I get my ass back to the dojo enough to get a promotion. You need to contribute to the dojo as well as everything else. So I've just not been going over there as often but I still train and it's great. It's, uh, Okinawan karate called Uechi-ryu and it's traditional. I like it. My sensei is incredible.

RRX: That's pretty cool, man. I don't know what percentage of people are black belt, but I know it's very low.

PT: It's funny because when people hear the word karate ... in the United States, what they're usually thinking of is taekwondo. Which is a great martial art. It's Korean. However, anybody with a black belt can open a dojo and say I'm a sensei and here you go. But in our particular style, you have to be at least a 5th-degree Black Belt and you have to do another test to become what they call shihan. And then, at that point, you're allowed to promote people and advance their belts and stuff. So because you start out with a white belt and yellow and on and on until you get your black belt. The weird thing about that whole black belt thing is originally

everybody now starts out with a white belt, right? And after about 3.5 years of training it starts to get pretty dirty. That was how you determined if someone was a black belt or not, by how dirty their original white belt was.

RRX: Ah.

PT: It took years for that belt to get dirty enough to be black and that's where that came from.

RRX: That's, that's an interesting concept right there.

PT: In Okinawa, karate was mostly done in somebody's backyard or somebody's home. It wasn't a big organized thing. It's that way now, but originally it wasn't.

RRX: So, here's your new title ... it could be guitar black belt, like you got your black belt in guitar. That would definitely do it. You're already a fifth-degree on that.

PT: Well, here's something interesting. I just recently had a signature guitar made by a company called Valkenburg in Las Vegas and they made me this Stratocaster-looking guitar. Its color is called coral red or something, and it's got a black stripe on it, for the black belt and 3 gold stripes on the black belt to signify my third-degree designation.

It's got a kanji, which is Japanese writing. One kanji can mean a whole bunch of things and, in this case, it means heart or all your heart and soul and all that, and it's called Kokoro. It's a really cool guitar and if anybody wants one they can order one.

RRX: Oh, nice!

PT: It's a great guitar. I'm gonna start playing it live now. Yeah, you've gotta come out and see us. There's a lot of energy going on for three guys. It's great!

RRX: Well, I appreciate your time so much. It's been a pleasure!

PT: You take care, brother. I'll see you then.

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Jim Kaufman

Capital Region Timekeepers

BY OP CALLAGHAN

Jim Kaufman. Photo provided.

As I sat down to write up this month's edition of Capital Region Time Keepers, I decided to reach out to my friend Howard Glassman to get his opinion on drummer Jim Kaufman. "Jimmy the Kid," exclaimed Howard. "Solid as Sears, when Sears was actually ... well, solid! I can't remember him missing a beat or losing his composure live. He's a machine. No really, I think he's part cyborg."

Hot Cousin lead vocalist Nicole Monroe tells me, "Jimmy is an incredible, almost mythical, drumming beast. I gave him the nickname "sawdust" because that's what he makes out of his drumsticks. When he packs up at the end of a show, I have to vacuum the wood shavings from under the set! He is an incredible bandmate and one of my best friends. He is a Cousin through and through and I love him." So please

welcome Jim Kaufman!

RRX: How did you get started playing drums?

JK: Legend has it that when my mother was pregnant with me, I'd kick along to the beat in the womb whenever she'd go see my dad's band practice or play live. My parents bought a kit off a distant family member when I was seven and I started banging away then.

RRX: Did you take lessons? What was your first kit?

JK: It was a black Ludwig 4-piece, probably early-'80s model. I took lessons a few years later from a family friend and local gigging drummer Rob Cenci. He taught out of the old Drome Sound on Central Ave. I think I took two years' worth of lessons from him. After that, I spent most of my time playing along with the radio, CDs, or tapes. I'd spend countless hours by myself learning all the songs across

various stations and genres. Some drummers spend hours practicing rudiments and technical stuff, but for me, I really want to vibe with other players. I never cared to be the greatest technical player. What I like the most is playing with other people, which can't be taught, just learned through experience. I may not be the most proficient player, but I know how to interact with other musicians on the fly whether it's in front of a live audience or at rehearsal, prepping for the next gig.

RRX: Do you come from a musical family? Do you play any other instruments?

JK: Yes, my father is a guitar player and I remember hearing him rehearse with various groups over the years when I was very young. He used to have practice in our basement when I was very young, and I'd stay up to hear them play. Later on, I would

accompany him to a band member's house while they rehearsed. I took up saxophone in grade school because they didn't offer drum kit as an option; only percussion. I later picked back up with drum lessons in the second half of my tenure at the College of Saint Rose.

RRX: Who were some of your early influences? What about now?

JK: Classic rock was always my go-to for inspiration; Bonham, Peart, etc. But I really dig the session guys from that era; Russ Kunkel, Gary Mallaber, Jeff Porcaro, Jim Gordon, Kenny Buttrey, Hal Blaine, etc. I love the diversity that each of them has shown over a career in session work.

As for the past several years, I've been listening to a ton of jazz, metal, and prog. I've always been fascinated with the stuff I can't play. Whether it is a completely different approach and style than what I'm versed in, like jazz,

or extreme heavy metal that employs insane double-kick patterns and lightning-fast fills that I just drool over, or the complicated time changes and technicality of prog greats like Bill Bruford.

RRX: Tell me about some of the bands you've played with.

JK: How much space do I have? ;)

Currently, there's Hot Cousin, whom I've been with for the better part of 21 years. Throughout that time, I've done numerous projects like Plastic Jesus, Horror Business (the world's best Misfits tribute), Grainbelt with Howe Glassman, and Hillbilly Horns, which started out as a horn-driven party cover band and evolved into a horn-driven country cover band with a few originals. An indie rock band before Hot Cousin was the Highsocks, which I joined out of college and went on to tour across the U.S. twice. I got to play in a cover band with my dad called FOG (five old guys) for a few years, which was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. And then there are a bunch of smaller groups here and there, not to mention several sit-ins with various acts and a lot of session work.

RRX: What do you do for fun?

JK: I collect vinyl. It's been my hobby and passion for the past 30+ years. I've amassed a collection of over 15,000 records.

RRX: That's a lot of vinyl! What are you playing for a kit now? What is your current setup?

JK: I like to keep it really simple. I play a five-piece Yamaha; two crashes and a ride. And the occasional cowbell. I can adjust to what the music demands, so adding or subtracting toms or another kick isn't out of the question.

RRX: Any gig horror stories?

JK: Oh yeah, tons. Most recently, I had a snare stand break on me mid-set. I had to prop it up with my leg until the set break. I've had drum risers separate while I'm playing, almost being

eaten alive by the stage. I've had cymbals blow over at an outside show. I drove all the way to NYC once and forgot my snare, so I had to go to Guitar Center in the middle of Manhattan traffic to buy another one. And then there are all the times I was supposed to use another person's or the club's kit just to arrive and find out it was missing something essential or just a piece of junk.

RRX: That sounds terrible! If you could play drums in any band, who would it be, and why?

JK: A lot of people dream of being rock stars but I'd be happy behind the scenes doing session work or backing a touring musician rather than be the superstar myself. But in all likelihood, I'd like to play in front of as many people as possible who are gonna be receptive to whatever style I'm playing, whether it be covers or originals. I've done large festivals and played in front of crowds of varying sizes, and nothing is more exciting from my point of view than people totally immersed in the music, whether they're dancing or singing along, or moshing and stage diving. That kind of crowd reaction is what I live for, so if I can do it for larger audiences, that would be my goal.

RRX: Where can we see you playing next?

JK: Hot Cousin is headlining Rock-in' on the River in Troy, on Wednesday, July 10. We're sharing the bill with the legendary Chris Busone and his band, and the Albany Rock Pit which I'm most excited to see because they're kids who are learning to rock out at a young age. I love watching young talent develop, whether it's a middle school band or a virtuosic teenager who is blowing people away. It'll be a great time with some great musicians all around. And I'm looking forward to sharing the stage with you which will be a first for me ;)

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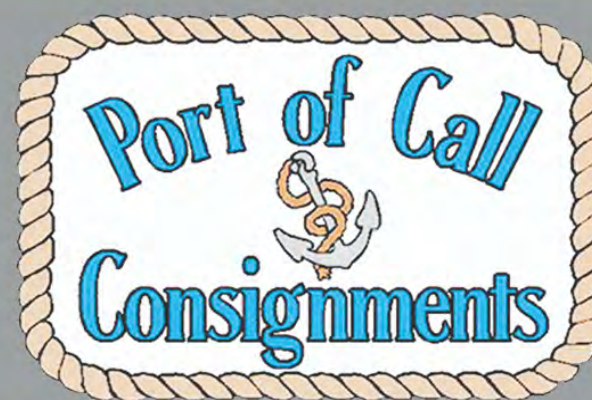
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Horse Grave

From “Thanks for Asking!”

BY LIAM SWEENY

Horse Grave. Photo provided.

We caught up with Horse Grave and had a chat. This is what they had to say.

RRX: Who are three people who support the craft that you would like to shine a spotlight on?

LK: Here are a bunch

John Cook

Jared Weed

BJ

The Krak Bros & Crisis Isolation

Jeff Leszczarz

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RRX: I know when pitching it helps to tell someone it’s “this meets that.” So let’s try that with you. If you had to give me two bands that meet each other in your sound, what are those bands? More than two bands?

MD: Candiria meets The Red Chord for afternoon tea in a sun drenched

garden. Car Bomb gazes at them contentedly.

RRX: Would you rather have one of your songs blow up and make you a one-hit wonder and household name, or would you rather have all your songs be solidly received, but no chart-climbers? (You have to pick one or the other here.)

MD: I’d much rather have one song blow up. If we had a tune reach 5 billion streams, we’d receive so many hundredths of a nickel.

RRX: In the universe of music, anything can happen. Bizarro doppelgängers can walk down the street in feather boas. Who would be your musical opposite and why? What do you think the “anti-you” band would sound like?

DBD: Our opposite would play EQX-friendly music that my spouse would like. Digestibly arranged, non-abrasive, and terminally chill. They’d avoid rhythms with odd

numbers like the plague and churn out squeaky-clean TikTok-ready tunes for hippie moms to dance to. Their music would be much closer to the song Instant Doppelgänger than Involuntary Doppelgänger. Everyone’s cup of tea, not a taste you have to acquire. Bizarro Horse Grave would definitely eat at Reggie’s instead of Monk’s.

RRX: What was the very first reaction to your music, from the first person to ever hear so much as a practice jam or the demo of your first song?

CROW: A little over a year ago I played a rough practice recording of our first song for Billy Harrigan. An artist that has tattooed Dylan and I, as well as designed the artwork for one of our shirts. Billy has also sang for some local bands Dirt Church being one; so his opinion matters to me beyond just being my tattoo artist and good friend. He was nothing short of supportive and

kind. Noted a 2-step passage that stood out from the rest of the piece, which is arguably the most death metal oriented of our arrangements.

RRX: What instrument would you add to the band if you could? Is there anything you are trying to do musically that would be helped with one or more additional players?

CROW: Before we lucked into Dylan joining the ranks, we were briefly toying with the idea of having a synth bass player. Keys in general when tactfully incorporated into any heavy music always catches my attention. I listen to a lot of electronic music and appreciate when the genre lines can blur. Always wanted to be in a band that was kind of like a heavier version of The Cars. The band Luke and I were in previously, “Start The Reactor” flirted with this notion a bit.

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Bryan McPherson

*Trading big sky
country for the
open road.*

Bryan McPherson.
Photo by J Rock
Photography.

BY ROB SMITTIX

R **RRX:** Bryan Mc-Fur-Son, I am saying it correct. Right?

BM: Yeah, that works. You can say it either way. I don't give a sh** anymore. Mc-Fear-Sen, Mc Fur-Son ... who cares?

RRX: I'm pretty sure you told me years ago it was Mc-Fur-Son.

BM: The. actual way to pronounce it is Mc-Fur-Son. That's how the Scottish pronounce it. It's a Scottish name. Everyone in Boston says Mc-Fear-Sen.

RRX: Well, they're wrong but it really comes down to how YOU say it.

BM: I stopped participating in that fight. I say it both ways just to f*** with people.

RRX: There you go. I'm pronouncing it the Scottish way.

BM: Sounds good.

RRX: What you been up to these days?

BM: Living in Montana, writing songs, making records, doing shows.

RRX: It seems like you're always on the road.

BM: I spent a lot of time on the road. I've actually not been traveling much in the last few years. So this will be my longest stretch of being on the road in four years.

RRX: Well, good. I'm glad we're a part of it. I'm already letting everyone know that you're banned from Disneyland because it's like the coolest f***ing thing ever.

BM: Yes, I have a habit of getting banned. So, come to the show before I get banned.

RRX: Right? Well, I mean the reason for that is apparently people just don't always get down with some of the content. I do, I'm all about it. Matter of fact, your song "I See a Flag" is one of my go-tos. I blast it every time I'm doing dishes and sing along. I'm kinda on the same page as your lyrics.

BM: Hopefully you don't break the

dishes while you're listening.

RRX: Only during the part where it says I'll be Mad Max ...

BM: There you go. That's how the dishes get done when you listen to my songs. Smash 'em.

RRX: How did things really get up and rolling for you in the music business?

BM: Well, I started playing everywhere I could play and I still do that. I would play in the subway in Boston. I would play in the park. I would play open mics. I would play sh***y dive bars and I still do it. I'm still trudging along in this musical experience. I still employ the same philosophy, which is go out and play and let the songs and the performance speak for themselves.

That's the only way I've really been able to engage new people interested in my music. The albums are cool, online is cool, but playing live is undeniable. You just have to give people an experience

and if you do, they'll come along for the ride.

RRX: Yeah, absolutely. Playing everywhere and anywhere. You mentioned playing the small places but you've also been up on some pretty big stages as well. Obviously toured with Dropkick Murphys in the past. And s***... You did a show with Chuck Berry. What other big ones were there?

BM: I opened up for Alice Cooper once and I played a show with Steve Earle. Those are some of the bigger names I've been able to open up for or play with.

RRX: What do you enjoy more, the bigger shows or the intimate ones? Is it pretty much the same? Is just getting out in front of people?

BM: I like playing to people who are interested and engaged. So it can be five people in a living room or 5,000 people in a giant club. I don't like playing to people who don't give a s***.

RRX: I understand that. There's nothing like feeling like a jukebox.

BM: I never underestimate people's ability to not care.

RRX: Yeah. No s***.

BM: The ones that do, I care greatly about. You know? There's nothing better than connecting with an audience in this creative experience.

RRX: Amen to that. So, what's your take on UFOs and aliens and s***?

BM: Sure. Why not?

RRX: Well, you've got a bigger sky to look at these days. I've been seeing UFOs quite frequently since 2022. They say once you see them, you keep seeing them and it seems to be the case and I have several videos to prove it.

BM: Probably a military fly-by with the latest technology around.

RRX: It probably is most likely. I just feel it's kind of weird that they're doing it in urban settings. Like I'm seeing this right in the middle of the city

areas, which is bizarre. But, yeah, keep your eye to the sky in Big Sky Country.

BM: Things have been getting weird, that's for sure.

RRX: They have been. I could maybe see a song about that. Have you written a song about how things are getting weird or are they always about that?

BM: I would say they're always about that. You can listen to my records and hear about some weirdness.

RRX: Last time we talked, you were kinda going in a different direction musically, getting away from the political stuff. Like it was getting irritating to write about it. But I don't know, I feel like you kind of came back to that a little bit and I'm happy about it.

BM: Yeah, undeniable. I just have to write about what I'm experiencing. In the last few years, I've experienced some s***, and it came out in songs.

RRX: When I listen to your music,

I'm like, "Finally somebody had to balls to say it." Honestly, a lot of people are thinking it, and are afraid to say it publicly.

BM: Yes. And I can tell you why ... because you get attacked.

RRX: They sure the hell do. I remember putting up a post online and requesting that it doesn't turn into a political thing, but it did. They just can't help themselves.

BM: No, no. Everyone's at each other's throats. I'm all about free expression. I'm of an era when you could do that. We're not really in that era anymore. So doing that comes with consequences. If you happen to think or have experienced anything outside of the chosen narratives, we'll just say.

RRX: It sucks, man.

BM: Yeah, we're in a new puritanical era but I think there's some chinks in the armor and people are getting real sick of that. So, we'll see.

RRX: I think so. 2024 is looking to

be a wild ride.

BM: Yeah. I mean, it's been a wild ride for a while now, so when the aliens come down, I'm not gonna be surprised. But I'll be out here in Montana, or maybe I'll be on the road. Who knows where I'll be?

RRX: Well, I keep praying for aliens or Jesus, you know, either/or; it'd be great right about now.

BM: I'm into it, man. I like the spiritual belief, I get down with that, aliens or Jesus.

RRX: It seems like it would be about time, like hurry the hell up. Bring on the apocalypse already!

BM: We'll see what happens. If you wanna see Jesus and aliens, come to the show. That's gonna happen.

RRX: We'll invoke the spirits and the alien gods.

BM: It's coming.

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Before breaking out in the metal scene, she had to break in.

Taylor Destroy

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Taylor Destroy. Photo by Brandon Lame.

RRX: What is Taylor up to today? What are you doing?

TD: I'm in a band called Aspect Iris. We are a progressive metalcore band and we've been writing a lot recently. Our last EP Vol. 0 was recorded with Landon Tewers from The Plot in You. It was the first thing we ever released. I also was invited to New York Fashion Week recently and our song actually got played on one of the top three biggest runway stages, which was so f**king cool. I never in my whole life would imagine being a part of something like that. But I got to go and be in the front row. I watched all these models walk down the runway to our song. It was an incredible experience. As for just Taylor Destroy right now, I've been working on coming back full force with my TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube content along with posting more things to streaming platforms.

RRX: I'm picturing this Fashion Week. So when I picture Fashion Week, when I picture the runway, I'm picturing EDM music, you know, like in the movies or whatever because I don't go to that stuff. I just picture that in the movies or

the TV shows like that's the kind of music - I wouldn't imagine progressive metalcore being used for something like that. Did you ever get a sense of why they used it? Is it that they're just changing? Is it a cultural thing? How did you explain it to yourself?

TD: It depends on the designer. One designer had country music, another designer had some EDM, another designer had pop music, but the designer that used our music, her name is Harleen Middleton and her designer studio name is Haus of Harleen, and she is very alternative. She's really cool, tatted all over the place and her runway was more of a message. So all the other shows I watched that day were just your typical models walking down the runway and that was pretty much it. But what Harleen did is she told a story and it was so impactful. Each piece that she created aligned with the story about things like sexual abuse, mental abuse, and things that you go through throughout life. It was just really cool. So it was more alternative. It made me really proud to be a part of something that had a message like that. I stand up

for the girls, the gays, the "theys," and the entirety of the LGBTQ+ community. One thing I love about my community - I haven't even been posting regularly for about a year. I broke my ankle last year. But even though I'm not really posting much right now, if somebody makes a video saying women can't scream, my community will tag me in there and say, "Taylor, did you see this?" They just want me to go in there and roast them. So, that's what I do.

RRX: That turns into a question. I almost don't want to answer or ask it because it seems like it's such a common question. You're a female metal singer. You know, what's it like in that world? And let me try to find a way to answer or to ask that uniquely. Did you ever encounter any vocal challenges? Not even as a woman, just as a person. Did you, did you encounter any vocal challenges when you were coming into it? Were you encouraged to scream louder than other people or were you encouraged the opposite way?

TD: Being a woman in the scene, I was never looked at too kindly. I was

actually in music about eight to 10 years ago and I was in our scene. Everybody s**t on me and didn't take me seriously. Everybody hated me. No matter what I did, it didn't matter. I would post things and the comments online were just people being nasty to me. They even went as far as saying that they hope that I get assaulted at shows or sexually assaulted at shows. It was awful and I got bullied out of it. So I stopped making music for about, God, I wanna say like six years. Then came TikTok. I got on that just for fun. My sister got me on it to do some cosplay stuff. I didn't expect anything. Then I saw someone I looked up to for years; their name is KTheScreamerOfficial on YouTube. So I decided to duet them and the video did all right. I was like, "Oh well, maybe I'll come back." Then I posted my cover of "Popular Monster" by Falling In Reverse and, overnight, I got 100,000 followers. It was the most crazy thing. And then everyone was like, "Where's your band? Where's your merch?" And I didn't have any of that. I was gone for so long, but then everyone was just so encouraging. It's changed a lot

now. So now you got people like Courtney LaPlante and Maria Brink and all these other amazing female-fronted bands. It's more accepted now. Back when I started, it didn't matter if you were good or not, it was just, "We're gonna s**t on you because you're a woman" and that's kind of what it seemed like anyway. You still get those comments saying, "You don't actually scream; it's autotune," which makes no sense. I'm sure you know this; you can't generate a scream from autotune. But regardless, it's an amazing thing to be a part of now. And I love just seeing all of my friends coming up. My best friend Kasey Karlsen from Deadlands - she's killing it and I'm so proud of her. Now is the time for us to rise up. And I think we're doing a damn good job at that right now.

But I guess to go back to your original question. Was there anything difficult when I first started screaming? So I started when I was 10 years old. My mom and my dad raised me on metal. I was looking

up to people like Chester Bennington and one day I was, like, I wanna do that. So I started learning to scream in my room and my parents didn't know about it until my 13th birthday party. I screamed in front of the entire family and everyone was just stunned. They were like, "What just happened?" It was funny, but it actually came rather easy to me the first time I screamed. I was at my friend's birthday party. We were just passing around a mic trying to give our best metal scream, and I did it. One of my friends said, "That was actually pretty good." So I went home and just practiced it until I could do it. The only thing I could say that I'm struggling with now is that I'm trying to get into doing false chords. I found out from our producer that I'm actually using a fry and a false chord at the same time, but I can't just strip it away and do just a false chord. So one day I would really like to be able to do that.

RRX: Tell me about your band, Aspect Iris. Tell me how you came up with

the name because I always loved it. That's something I'm always interested in and I never ask.

TD: So I guess I'm just gonna go through the whole thing from start to finish. When everything was happening on TikTok, I was explaining to one of my old producers the kind of band I wanted to be in. He then said, "You should just join this band" and then connected us all together. We all sat down and we just clicked. It's something I've never seen in a band dynamic, personally. I used to take photos and videos in the scene back in the day. I was all over Bogies, Valentine's, and Northern Lights back when they called it that - just taking pictures. And a lot of the bands, not all of them but a lot of them, hated each other. So I always said, "I never want that." I want a big friendship and that's what I found. I'm so thankful and proud that I found people who are just such genuine human beings. We all love the same things and we're all so supportive of one another. I'm

in a band with my best friends, and that's all I ever wanted. And it's why we're not eagerly looking for a bass player right now. We don't wanna mess up our vibe.

But Aspect Iris originally was gonna be called Iris Aspect. The boys came up with that before I even showed up. What ended up happening is I took to Google (as I do) and there's a painter somewhere that goes by something similar to Iris Aspect. And I was like, "Oh, we can't take this small artist's name." So then I was like, "But wait, what if we change it to Aspect Iris? Wouldn't that be cool?" The boys ended up loving it more so we stuck with it. Basically, what Aspect Iris means is everyone has a different perspective on everything. What you see through your eyes could look completely different to someone else. It's all about the aspect of it. So Aspect Iris.



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*Confessions of a
shred-master and
a pseudo deli
chef.*

Joe Stump

BY ROB SMITTIX

Joe Stump. Photo provided.

RRX: This issue of Xperience was gonna be our big hip-hop issue and they all kind of flaked out. So now I got Pat Travers in this same issue as you. So, now it's the guitar hero issue.

JS: Pretty cool.

RRX: So, you've got a bunch of projects going on as well as Alcatrazz.

JS: Yeah. I got Alcatrazz, my solo thing, I have a Deep Purple tribute that I play with called Stormbringer and then I have a Rainbow tribute. We play a couple Purple things called Black Knight's Castle. That's the one BJ from Dokken plays in with me and then I have a band Tower of Babel, we've got a record coming out later this year; that's very much like a Blackmore-induced Rainbow, Deep Purple thing.

All top-notch musicians. The keyboard player, Mitheria, he's on tour now

with Bruce Dickinson. He plays in that Mandrake Project that Bruce Dickinson is out touring and promoting. And then the drummer, this guy Mark Cross who played with Firewind, he did a stint with Helloween and subbed for Scorpions. He's a powerhouse drummer. And this guy Jo Amore, the singer, he's like the French Dio, that's what they call him. If you're a fan of the old-school Rainbow and Purple stuff, we've taken it into a new era. So it's a strong record and will be out later this year. So yeah, I've got a bunch of things in the pipes.

RRX: What do they call you? A Shred Guitar Master? That's a big title to have. When do you start playing guitar to be able to become a Shred Guitar Master?

JS: I played a little when I was 10, just out of Mel Bay's Easy Way. You

know? This is a G7. This is a C, started reading music and taking lessons from some old dude. But then I was like, "This sucks." I stopped and then I picked it back up when I was like 13 or 14 and I've been into it ever since. Made my first record. I was in this metal band, Trash Broadway. We were signed to Torrid Records, which (at the time) the biggest thing they did is they put the first Exodus record "Bonded by Blood" out. We were like their more commercial metal project. So that was the first record I made back in '89. Then I got my solo deal with Leviathan. I got my first solo record deal; that was 1993. I've been releasing solo records steadily since then. The newest one, "Diabolical Ferocity," just came out - I think in 2000 - a few years ago. And then various different metal bands. I was in this

symphonic power metal band, Holy Hell. We used to tour quite a bit with Manowar. We were on the same label and management company. We used to do a lot of big European festivals, sport holes, and all that nonsense. I played with various metal bands and I've been doing the Alcatrazz thing since 2019.

RRX: You've gotta be on your game to be in that band.

JS: Yeah. Well, originally when Graham Bonnet was singing, they wanted somebody that played like Yngwie and Ritchie Blackmore, obviously. I was a perfect fit for that. And then they also wanted the band to take a more metal direction that way. I'm kind of responsible for where it's at now and I've made three Alcatrazz records so far. The first one, "Born Innocent," with Graham.

Then I made two with Doogie White.

Doogie used to sing with Blackmore, pretty much same pedigree as Graham; sang with Blackmore and Rainbow, sang with Yngwie Malmsteen, sang with Michael Schenker. We did two with Doogie – “V,” and “Take No Prisoners” is the last one.

RRX: That’s awesome. I was thinking ... a guitarist like yourself, I imagine you probably have a huge guitar collection.

JS: Myself, yeah. I have a hook-up with ESP, so they’ve been really good to me. They’ve sent me many guitars over the years. The Strat is my weapon of choice. I have tons and tons of Fenders. I got a bunch of V’s as well. I probably got something like 60 guitars.

RRX: That’s it? (laughs)

JS: Yeah, a little over 60. I got a bunch of old Marshalls. Strats and old Marshalls. Just like my heroes Blackmore, Yngwie, Hendrix. Gary Moore, when he was a hard rock metal player, played a Strat.

RRX: Yeah, I was gonna ask you about that. Like who are your favorites? But it looks like you just answered me.

JS: Blackmore and Yngwie of course. Gary Moore, I love all eras of Gary Moore. Uli Jon Roth. I love Uli’s solo stuff, but of course I love the iconic work he did with the Scorpions on all those early records. I love Hendrix and I love Michael Schenker as well. So it’s cool for me, I played with two dudes that sang with a bunch of my heroes. So I can’t complain.

RRX: So you went to the Berklee College of Music and you teach there too?

JS: Yes, I’m an associate professor there. I’m like the shred guitar metal specialist on the faculty. I’ve been there since ‘93. You know, it’s my 31st year at the college.

There’s not too many jobs where you don’t have to go into work until 12 or 1 in the afternoon. If I have to tour, I can just tell the powers that be that I’m

gonna be on the road for a couple weeks. I just make up the work. It’s a good deal for me. I can’t complain.

RRX: Hell yeah. So, I’ve seen your YouTube and “Joe’s Deli.” It’s really funny and I love it.

JS: The “Joe’s Deli” thing kind of took on a life of its own. It started when Graham was in the band. I always eat after the show. It started out ... we all went to a grocery store during the day. I’ll get some sandwich meats and I’ll make myself a sandwich and maybe some potato or macaroni salad or something for after the show. Nothing crazy or heavy.

Jimmy Waldo, the keyboard player ... I was making him a sandwich and the band’s manager filmed it and then it kind of took on a life of its own. People at the record company Silver Lining, the label that Alcatraz is assigned to - they were very pro-“Joe’s Deli.” The record company gets more concerned with the amount of Delis I’m shooting

than any kind of music produced by the band.

RRX: That’s hilarious. It’s really entertaining though.

JS: Some guys, when they go out on the road, balloon up because they’re constantly eating crap. They go to truck stops, or rest areas, or the gas station. Buying candy and cookies. And I’m the opposite; I eat like a bird on the road.

RRX: Is there anything you wanted to say to the fans to get them to come on out?

JS: Yeah, it’s gonna be a guitar orgy. So if you love guitar, you will not be disappointed. After one of my shows, you never wanna hear guitar again. You know what I mean? I wouldn’t say it’s bludgeoning but it’s excessive.

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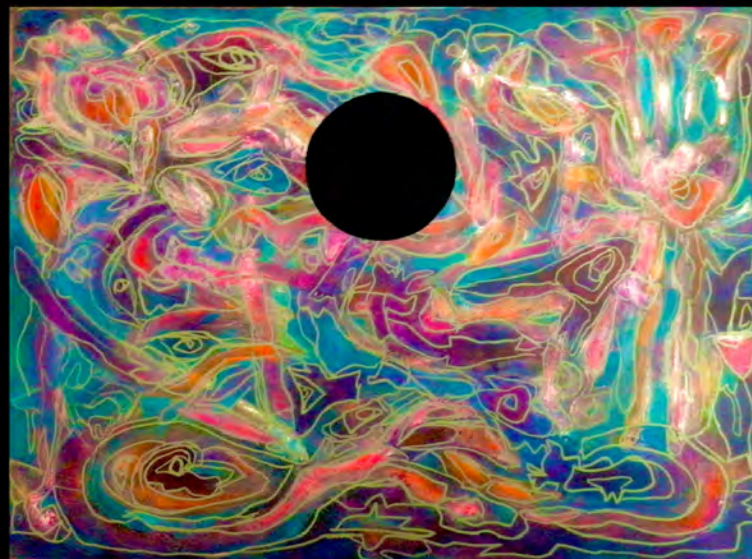
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The Singin' Guru

Dear Singin' Guru,

I recently saw a band where the lead singer had an incredible range. My friends and I were wondering how low or high the human voice can go. I knew where to get the answer, so enlighten me, Singin' Guru!

Yours truly,

Curious

Dear Curious,

The natural vocal range of singers varies depending on the untrained voice they are born with. Chorus singers, for instance, typically stick to their natural range and don't often venture into extensive vocal development like lead singers do. In our studio, these are the typical voice ranges we see for untrained singers:

Adult Males: Generally, they sing between E2 to F4. (Remember, the numbers refer to octaves.)

Adult Females: Typically, their range spans from F3 to B4.

For reference, middle C on a piano is C4, akin to the 1st fret on the 2nd string of a standard-tuned guitar. A trained singer, with consistent practice, can extend their range significantly—often gaining an octave or more.

Professional/trained examples - to illustrate the capabilities of professional singers let's look at some songs:

The high note in "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey reaches B4, nearly an octave above middle C. Steven Tyler hits a G#5 in "Dream On" by Aerosmith, just four semitones below the top of a typical soprano range. The high note in

"Take on Me" by A-ha peaks at E5. Johnny Cash, known for his bass-baritone voice, reaches down to F2 in "Folsom Prison Blues."

Check out these world records. Moving beyond typical ranges, the world records are incredible:

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Tim Storms: He is known for the lowest note ever sung (G-7, yes that is negative 7) and the widest vocal range for a male singer (10 octaves from G-7 to G5).

Everyone has a natural vocal limit, just as they have a unique body type. Consider Arnold Schwarzenegger and Justin Bieber. Their differences in physique reflect their different potential in muscular development. The question is not could Justin get 'buff' the question is could he be world-class like Arnold with training? That is doubtful, but he could take what he's got and crank it up a notch (or two or three or ...) and look very different. Anyone's range can be vastly expanded with proper training.

Yours Truly,

The Singin' Guru

Dear Singin' Guru,

I really like to sing, but basically, I suck. Are people born with natural talent of which I have none?

Signed,

Sucks at Singing

Dear Sucks at Singing,

This question is asked all the time, and the answer is positive: if you want to sing, you should train to sing. Here's an analogy: Take Michael Jordan. Michael Jordan wasn't "born" to play basketball. In high school, he was an ordinary player at first. His coach put him on the JV team to give him more experience because he would have had limited playing time on the varsity team at his skill level. Imagine Michael Jordan sitting on the bench all the time!

Michael used this as motivation to improve his playing, and his work ethic became legendary—first on the court for practice and last to leave. The same can be said for singing. If you want to sing, anyone can improve. Do you have what it takes to be a pro? That's something you won't know until you put a lot of work into it, but if you don't love singing enough to start training and find out, you probably don't like it enough to be successful.

Like everything else, everyone has natural talents and natural deficits. In the case of singing, maybe you can match pitch better, have better

resonance, or possess better breath control. However, all aspects of singing can be improved through training. There is lots of scientific evidence that shows that focused practice and proper technique can make your singing better — you won't suck anymore! Other evidence shows that the brain's plasticity allows it to adapt and improve skills with consistent practice, even in adults.

If you want to find out how good you can be, plan on spending a few minutes a day, every day, with the right training program. You get the right training program by finding the right vocal coach. Just like Michael Jordan couldn't become one of the best by shooting hoops in his backyard, you can't become the best by singing in the shower. Everyone deserves the chance to sing, and you shouldn't use the excuse that you aren't talented enough to try.

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Eric DeLage

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Eric Delage.
Photo by Char Dennis

BY JOHN SANCHIRICO

I first met Eric Delage, via Greg Bell at Bellstock Music Festival in July of 2022. We crossed paths around sunrise one morning, walking along a winding, bubbling creek, babbling and glistening in the early morning sunshine. I could tell that he had an overflowing appetite for not just music, but for everything life has to offer us on any given day. A kindred soul that I have had the honor of knowing and growing in the same soil along with since. I had a chance to sit down with Eric at Ophelia's, where he is the Chief Sound Engineer, and ask him some questions about his work and a sound man's (woman's) role, more critical to any band's performance than most would ever know.

RRX: First ... Eric, what do you like to be called?

ED: Well, "sound engineer" makes me feel the most accomplished and professional. There's nothing like

earning the moniker "engineer" through dedication and hard work, as opposed to going to school and just getting a degree on paper. However, I've been called "sound god" and "sound ninja" too, and even "engineer" doesn't really hold up to either of those, lol!

RRX: Beyond being an audio engineer, what other roles do you typically play at gigs or venues that you are working at? And, what do you do, step-by-step, from the time you arrive at work, to getting in your car at end of the night; order-of-chores described simply as possible?

ED: An audio engineer seems to be an all-encompassing term these days. Shows used to have an FOH (front-of-house) engineer and a monitor engineer, but I fill both of those roles. Depending on the venue or gig, I'm also the lighting designer and stage manager, and production manager. Once I get

the information for the event, I'll typically reach out to the band to get a stage plot/input list (if not procured by the promoter), discuss equipment needs (if any), and finalize load-in/sound check times. If I need to bring equipment, I'll make sure it's all organized and packed in my box truck because that part doesn't get done after the gig, lol.

When I arrive on site, I'll make sure the stage is clean and presentable for the band. Then, I'll set up a few mic stands and place them off the stage with the cables and mics so they're accessible as needed. Then I'll lay down a couple of stage boxes (usually one by the drums, and one up front for vocals). Then it's time to bring the PA to life. I'll turn on the mixing console, followed by the digital stage rack, and (finally) the amps. Then I'll program the console according to the input list, setting gains, presumptuous EQ settings,

dynamics, and routing, all based on my experience with the mics, the band, and the venue (and sometimes that all goes out the window depending on the band and how they are used to doing things!).

Sound check is always a crap shoot. It depends on the band, what they expect, and what they are used to. A lot of bands I work with don't usually get an engineer and do their own sound from the stage, so they're not used to the process. Hell, I haven't even got it down yet. I'll try to do a line check while the musicians are noodling around and getting comfortable. Once I get that done, I'll get their monitors set to make sure it sounds good on the stage and, as they play a couple of songs, I'll make sure it also sounds good in front of the stage for the audience.

After that, it's just a lot of waiting around for the show. Eating dinner,

choosing/playing house music, setting the house lights, etc. When it's showtime, the band and I try to coordinate an entrance. Then they play, as I scrutinize every setting of every channel on the soundboard.

After the show, I quickly unplug all of the microphones and remove them from the stage to give the musicians room to clear off. When most of their gear is cleaned up, I'll wrap up the cables and put them away neatly. Then I shut off the amps, digital snake, and finally the soundboard. Then it gets dusted off and covered. I walk circles around the room about ten more times to make sure I'm not forgetting anything, and then I finally leave.

RRX: What is the most challenging "in show" audio calamity (if any) you have faced and how did you correct the situation?

ED: The most challenging "in show" audio calamity is always the screech of feedback. Just when you think you

have everything eq'd sufficiently in soundcheck, something changes. The sound and resonance of the room is changed when it's filled with bodies, or sometimes the performer comes out wearing a hat which could reflect frequencies from the monitor back into the microphone. When time is of the essence, I will turn down the volume in their monitors to immediately rectify the situation and try to find the offending channel and frequency inconspicuously later.

RRX: What is the most rewarding moment in memory you have associated with working as a sound engineer thus far?

ED: You never like to see a fellow sound guy struggle, but being able to step in and save a show makes you feel like a hero to all of the people there to see the show. My wife and I had driven down to NJ to see the all-female Grateful Dead cover band Brown Eyed Women. When the show started, I could see

that the band was uncomfortable and not performing very well due to monitoring issues. I ran over to help the sound guy and together we were able to get the show to a place where everyone could enjoy it.

RRX: What is the most disappointing moment in memory you have associated with working as a sound engineer thus far?

ED: The most disappointing moment was when I failed to appease the artist. I can't remember all of the details, but I was the monitor engineer and they were not happy with their mix. They talked shit about me to their bandmates after the show right on the stage as I was cleaning up. I was still a rookie and had plenty to learn back then, but the attitude of that artist taught me to never take anything personally. I always find something to learn from those situations.

do all the work, which was fine for me. I got the opportunity to run

soundcheck, mix the show, and run stage lights. From there, any job I wanted was within my grasp.

RRX: Do you play music yourself at all and or have any other artistic pursuits of your own?

ED: I don't make music professionally, but I love to make rhythmic noises. I have a collection of instruments that I've collected from thrift shops and yard sales over the years. I even make some of my own instruments. My artistic outlet is to make things from found objects. I take a lot of walks and find some cool stuff. Eventually, I make something out of the cool stuff I find, when the inspiration strikes.

RRX: In one word, describe what music means to you?

ED: To me, music is love. The feeling it gives me when I hear it, the feeling I get when I do a good job, the people I meet. Everything about it is love.



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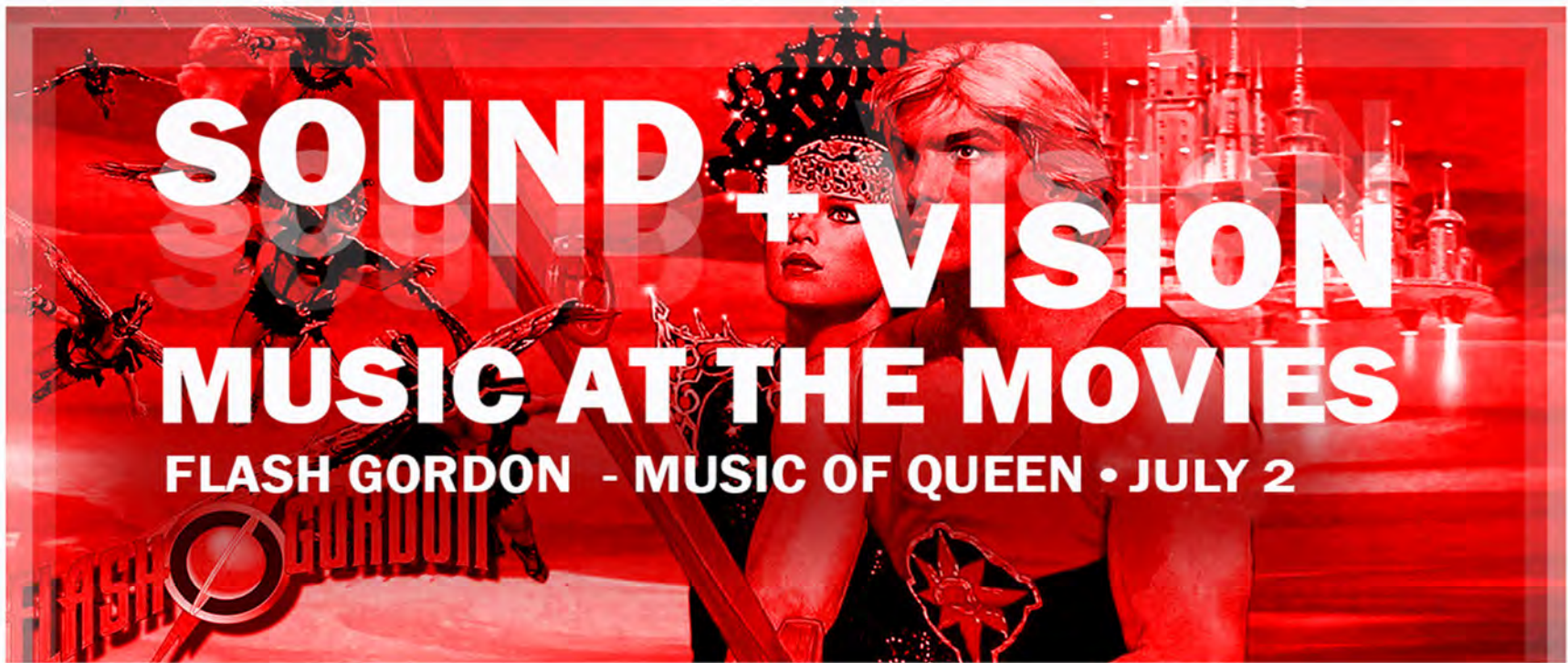
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Tarik Shah

A heart of music can't break in solitude.

BY COLIN ROBERTS

“I was working with everybody,” Tarik Shah says. “I was working left, right, and center.” The bass player and host of the Wednesday Night Jazz Jam at 518 Craft in Troy is soft-spoken, quiet, and unassuming, but when one watches him perform, it’s clear there’s something more—in his playing, in his demeanor, even in his look. Playing to a small, engaged audience in the bar weekly, he speaks between numbers, expressing his gratitude and admiration for his band members, and of the joy of playing live, always with a smile on his face.

But it wasn’t that long ago that Shah was an in-demand sideman. The ‘80s and ‘90s were fruitful decades for the bass player, touring the world, playing alongside marquee names like Betty Carter, Abbey Lincoln, and Gloria Lynne, and getting the call for albums by the likes of Pharoah Sanders and World Saxophone Quartet. Shah even got recommended for a gig with Sir Roland Hanna by the legendary bassist

Ron Carter himself. Then in 2005, at 45 years of age, Shah was charged with providing aid for terrorism to which he pled guilty, only after serving over 30 months in solitary confinement. The case against him is cited as an example by journalists and legal groups of the FBI’s biased tactics used to entrap Muslims following the September 11th attacks. He served fifteen years in federal prison and was released in 2018.

“I KNEW WHAT I WANTED TO DO FROM THEN ON”

Shah was born in 1963 in the Bronx, a neighborhood that shaped him as a person and a musician. “I grew up in a really disciplined, strict household; both of my parents being Black Nationalists, both of them joining the Nation of Islam,” he says. “Malcolm was alive at the time; Malcolm X named me.”

The lifestyle may have been strict, but the music was free-flowing. Shah’s older brother, Antoine, was a

classically-trained pianist, and his sister Michelle was into groups like the Four Tops, the Stylistics, and the Temptations. A steady stream of jazz music was coming from his parents, his house always filled with music.

“The foundation of it was jazz, and I didn’t reject it,” he says. “I heard Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley, some John Coltrane. I heard many vocalists like Sarah Vaughan, Gloria Lynne, Dinah Washington, Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstine, Frank Sinatra, Arthur Prysock, Nancy Wilson, Carmen McRae.”

“It was a great gamut of music even before I started playing that I just listened to that I didn’t reject because it was played in the house,” he adds.

Shah’s Uncle Charles would teach him how to play blues bass lines on a guitar—Charles needing Tarik as an accompanist to solo with—and the experience stuck with him. For his 12th birthday, Shah asked for a bass guitar, to which his mother obliged, gifting him

his first instrument—a cream-colored Cameo Deluxe electric bass with a Marlboro amplifier—and he took to it immediately. Music became the focal point of his entire youth.

“I knew what I wanted to do from then on,” says Shah. “I stopped watching sports. Everything that took time away from me playing the bass, I didn’t feel like it was worth it anymore because I loved the bass so much.”

Shah found himself drawn to fusion bands like Return to Forever, Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Weather Report, finding influence in bass players like Alphonso Johnson, Ralphie Armstrong, and eventually Jaco Pastorius. He got set up with his first bass instructor named Daryl Morgan, whom Shah describes as a virtuoso on electric bass.

“He really showed me how to develop my technique quickly,” Shah says. “I followed what he told me to do and I was fortunate to have a guy like him as my first teacher. Not somebody in a music

store who might have been a guitarist trying to teach bass, or another instrumentalist trying to teach bass. I had a bass player who had as much chops as Jaco Pastorius. Those types of chops, but he didn't play like him."

Shah was also taking music in school where his teacher, Mr. Altieri, was not only providing a more formal education in music theory, he was offering the young bass player his first gigs. Alongside Mr. Altieri, the 14-year-old Shah was playing at the Concord Resort Hotel upstate in Kiamesha Lake, learning how to create a set, improvise live, and also how to work professionally.

"During the summer, I would go up to the Concord with him and he would take me and a drummer, and he'd split the union pay between two high school musicians," he remembers. "In the summertime, I was making \$150 a week. Back then that was really good money to do what I loved."

Throughout his early teens, Shah

continued to work and play, and also study with a handful of teachers who helped evolve his skills and technique. By the time he was 16, Shah had begun to play upright bass and was making a living off playing music. That's when he headed out to Binghamton to study with the great Slam Stewart, a pivotal move in Shah's development.

"He is the first solo bassist in jazz, as far as solo bass playing melody lines and improv," he says of his mentor, Stewart. "And the interesting thing about him being a melodic soloist is that he did it all with the bow ... and he sang an octave above; really two octaves above what he was playing. That was Slam Stewart. He was a perfect bass player."

"GETTING HEARD ALL AROUND THE WORLD"

Stewart was a key figure in Shah's musical development, expanding on the knowledge and experience he had gained from his previous teachers like Daryl Morgan, Rodney Jones, and Ben

Brown. The unique style and approach, and Stewart's wealth of knowledge made its impact. While studying with Stewart, Shah accompanied the master bassist to watch the teacher's favorite player, Gary Carr perform at SUNY Binghamton.

"It was amazing to me because I hadn't heard the bass ever played that way," Shah remembers. "So, Gary is doing these classical things and making the bass sound like a huge violin; the sound sounds so beautiful. That was my first exposure to that type of excellence, from that perspective of the possibilities of what could happen."

In 1984, Shah appeared on his first record, playing on saxophonist Nat Dixon's album "Up Front." It was later that same year that he joined Betty Carter's band, debuting with the vocalist at the 1984 Saratoga Jazz Festival. With Carter, Shah would tour the world, gaining notoriety as an in-demand bassist and accompanist.

"That's really the pinnacle point of me being just a bass player used around town to me becoming a better known, world-class bass player in that sense," he says. "Getting heard all around the world, being on these different jazz festivals all around the world, all around the US, and now other musicians hear me."

His run with Carter resulted in one of the bassist's favorite recordings, a live album culled from their 1985 European tour, which included a memorable gig in communist East Berlin. The remainder of the '80s on into the '90s saw Shah touring with Dakota Staton, Gloria Lynne, and the Duke Ellington Orchestra, and recording albums with artists like Abbey Lincoln and Pharoah Sanders. In 1993, he even played the Presidential Inaugural Ball for Bill Clinton.

For two decades, Shah was a prominent sideman in the jazz world. But in May of 2005, his entire life shifted

Continued on Page 48.

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Continued from Page 45.

course when he was arrested by the FBI and charged with conspiracy to provide material support to a known foreign terrorist organization, to which he pled guilty after being held in solitary confinement for 31 months.

"JUST DOING WHAT I DO"

"I've never been involved in terrorism," Shah says. Nearly 20 years after his arrest, he maintains his innocence of the crime he was charged with, something that advocacy and legal rights groups agree with. Shah believes the FBI targeted him because of his Muslim faith and of being raised by Black Nationalist parents.

Between 2001 and 2003, two different FBI informants approached Shah, the second one creating a close relationship under the guise of seeking music lessons. The two often spoke of political topics, and though Shah expressed his mistrust and doubt in the American

government concerning their actions following the September 11th terrorist attacks, he asserts he never said anything promoting any terrorist activity.

"I gained a lot of trust in him," Shah says. "So I'm talking to him about what's in my heart, how I didn't agree with stuff going on politically. I'm talking to him; I'm not out giving speeches."

The charge stemmed from Shah's time spent teaching martial arts in the mosque; something he had done for years prior. The FBI linked his teaching of fighting and defense to providing skills to terrorist agents.

"I'm a martial artist; I was teaching martial arts in the mosque and they're saying, 'He's teaching people how to fight,'" says Shah. "I'm teaching martial arts; I'm teaching jiu-jitsu. I'm not taking people out to the gun range. I studied jiu-jitsu since the time I was a little boy. I had a school out in Harlem for 10 years. [I was] just doing what I do."

In April 2007, after being held in

solitary confinement for 31 months, Shah pled guilty. He maintains that he had no intention to plead, but felt that a fair and unbiased trial was not possible in his case. Two months later, he was sentenced to 15 years in federal prison.

"I made a very high plea; a 15-year plea after being held away from people, not being able to prepare for a trial because everything that I said to my lawyers was in a room that they mic'd, and it's supposed to be privileged," Shah says. "And they were out terrorizing my associates and my friends who, now that I'm out, now I know all about that. They've told me all of what happened to them."

Shah spent his prison sentence reading and teaching. He taught music as well as how to read Arabic. He wasn't allowed to hold classes or lead prayer, so he did so on a more one-on-one basis, but always in the open.

"There was a big warning to me, so I used to teach brothers how to read and

write Arabic and how to recite the Koran properly, but I would do it one-on-one. Sometimes I'd take two students at a time; the most I would take at a time was three," he says. "I would do it in the open; I wouldn't try to hide what I was doing."

"I nicknamed myself 'Mr. Compliance;' that's the way I got through," Shah adds. "I was like, 'I have to deal with this level of compliance to their requests and their so-called laws and stuff like that until I'm free of this madness.'"

Shah was released on March 28, 2018. He spent a short time in a halfway house before moving to the Capital District to help take care of his mother, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. He served three years of probation following his release without incident and is now working on getting things back on track.



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Prog Digest

BY KLYDE KADIDDLEHUMPER

Welp, this month, ol' Klyde was gonna make a rant about the misuse of the words "progress" and "progressive," with the topic revolving around the dumbest implementation of a system that is supposed to be better, more efficient, and more convenient ... which it is not. Then, I recalled that we already have a grumpy old man between these covers (get your minds out of the gutter people) – so – change in plan.

I've waxed poetic here about the joys of vinyl and many things analog. Maybe poetic is not the phrase you would use, but I am writing this bloody thing so I get to define it as I choose.

Anyway – Constant Companion and I dig a record store. Sometimes for new things we know nothing about, sometimes with purpose, and other times, well, so far we have not used the phrase "it seemed like a good idea at the time" – and you may fill in when and why I might have said this from time to time.

In a record store, where they carry old and new many times, we find things.

On a recent trip to Nashua, NH, there was a lovely little shop up the street, so we went. It was next door to a model train store with a giant LIONEL sign out front, but we resisted the urge to buy every Neil Young record they had ... look it up if you don't know the reference.

CC found many fine things. By album title: "Wild Things Run Fast," "Pure Pop For Now People," "Seconds of Pleasure," "Hasten Down The Wind," "Captured Angel," among others. Gram Parson's self-titled first release, "The Myths and Legends of King Arthur and The Knights of the Round Table," "No Nukes" (hey, it

was of a time), and "The Secret Policeman's Ball" were among my choices. The real gem of the bunch, however, was "Big Bambu" WITH the 12-inch EZ-Wider. (The primary reason the complete sets WITH are so tough to come by has, mostly, to do with guys like me in college).

Other trips have seen me find a lovely Tangerine Dream box set, the two Rubinoos albums from my college years (hey, if you are going to be in the Rochester area July 24 – check them out at the Abilene Bar and Lounge).

The already fairly sizable collection seems to grow with a mind of its own; Lord knows I don't have one of those.

The best hit I have made in a while was a couple of weeks ago at a local joint. Would you believe three, count 'em three, Marillion vinyl remix sets, in pristine condition from one of my all-time favorite band.

In chronological order of release – "Childhood's End," "Clutching at Straws," and "Brave." Each, in its own way, a masterpiece. The remixes are brilliant and the live material lovely time capsules.

Of the three, "Clutching at Straws" is my favorite. "Childhood" has their biggest hit – Kayleigh. "Brave" has wonderful material such as "Alone Again In The Lap of Luxury." "Clutching at Straws" – well – it is Fish's best dysfunctional set of lyrics. The track that sums it up – and please, be sure to credit to Fish (Derek W. Dick officially from East Lothian) – for me is "Warm Wet Circle."

Like a bullet hole in Central Park
 A warm wet circle
 And I'll always surrender
 To a warm wet circle

The artwork has such notables as Jack Kerouac, Lenny Bruce, John Lennon, James Dean, Ernest Hemmingway, and Janis Joplin – catching the theme?

That we get to revel in the fact that Fish is now a retiring rocker is pretty amazing, all things considered.

This is why we hunt for vinyl, old and new – artists we know and love and those we have not fallen in love with yet.

So, on a weekend day or maybe when you travel or perhaps on a day you are playing hooky – get off your sorry butt, feel the covers on your fingers while you flip through bin after bin after bin, etc.

So – if you're looking for me, I'm number one at the end of the bar ...

Until next time.

Klyde



Jade - Band On

BY SKETCHY HUBRIS

“It was Burma, after the war.”

Higgins (Magnum, P.I. 1982)

After serving in Vietnam, brothers Bob and Dennis Santa Lucia started the band Jade in 1971. Jade's name comes from a popular cologne of the time, Jade East.

Members of the band have come and gone, but 79-year-old Bob Santa Lucia has been a constant and consummate rock-and-roller as frontman for the band for 53 years. Jade will be performing as part of the Prunyn House Summer 2024 Concerts in the Barn series on July 17, from 6-8 p.m. Jade will also be performing at the Shenendehowa's 60th Reunion in October, Bob's graduating class.

Dennis, who lives in California now, will rejoin the band for the Prunyn House

show. Other current Jade bandmates are drummer Greg Coughlin (with the band for 35 years), bass player Pete Murray (28 years), and youngster/saxophonist Gordy Rockstroh (25 years).

RRX: Bob, what was the first song you learned to play?

BS: First song? You're going back to ... ha, ha, it had to be Elvis, 'cause I used to do him on the school bus going to school, probably "Hound Dog."

RRX: So the Prunyn House barn gig - you have done before?

BS: This is our 13th year, not in a row. There was Covid, and then in '22 they left us out (we will never know). And then we were back in '23.

GC: But they wanted us back!

RRX: How many songs do you main-

tain in your set list?

BS: I got enough songs to last me for 100 years.

GC: We never play the same song twice at a gig.

BS: It pisses some people off: "I wanna hear ... again." Pick another song.

RRX: What is a favorite song you guys do?

PM: "Drift Away."

GC: I like the Beatles a lot; "I Saw Her Standing There".

GR: "Boardwalk Angel," from the Eddie and the Cruisers movie by John Caferty and the Beaver Brown Band - there is an obscure one.

BS: All of them, but I always do "Brown Eyed Girl" for my daughter.

RRX: Since it's July, what do you

want for Christmas?

BS: What I want for Christmas is the next month; my birthday is on January 28. I want to make it to 80.

GR: Caught off guard; let's see, don't need a new saxophone. Come back to me.

RRX: I think you are going to answer last month's band question posed to Otobo: what is your favorite ice cream?

GC: I just want everybody to be healthy.

PM: Yes, everybody to remain healthy.

RRX: So Gordy, what is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

GR: It's gotta be vanilla-chocolate twist, it's gotta be soft ice cream. I'm wishy-washy; it's gotta be both vanilla and chocolate.



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The Top 40 Desert

BY JOHNNY MYSTERY

Out in the arid plains, we find the vapid wasteland we refer to as Pop Music. The Top 40 landscape has been talked of ad nauseam since this antiquated art form appeared nearly a century ago. Where's the melody anyway? I didn't ask that, Chuck Berry did. If Chuck was alive, would you argue with him? He would sock you the same way he did to Keith Richards when Keef had the audacity to touch Mr. Berry's guitar when he thought nobody was looking. These days, we are all looking and listening.

It would be easy to assume that the musical taste of the majority has devolved. The pop being played on the corporate, conglomerate, national broadcast networks seems to work. Peel back the onion, though, and you'll see things a bit more clearly. The wizards of musical smarts are not so much seeking talent and content as they are becoming trendmongers. There was once a day when record companies were run by balding, cigar-chomping, trenchcoat-wearing men who were throwbacks to the Vaudeville Era and actually took chances with new and different artists. They wouldn't go out of their way to find something bizarre, yet they had an open mind in their approach. They would just say, "I don't know what this is, but let's put it out and see what happens." Money would be budgeted for a project, and on it went and out it goes. Cast it to the wind and see what happens.

Today, because of laziness and just general malaise, it's an entirely different ballgame. A twenty-something fresh out of college with a major in, oh

let's say philosophy, walks into record company X and gets a job running for coffee and handing out the mail. Once this individual has proven a willingness to show up every day, they might get a real job. Unfortunately, that job turns out to be a talent scout, a job they are not entirely qualified for, but get anyway. The "talent" they find, for the most part, is not found in the clubs. It's so easy to jump on your computer and toss a few digital darts at unknowns who happen to look right. Once two or three or whatever the budget calls for are chosen, it just becomes a matter of signing, marketing, and distributing the "product." What you get is the same type of artist, over and over again. The executives are just that lazy and uninterested to bother. That's not the way to make records, but there it is.

It would seem now that, with the development of AI, the powers that be are content to set everything on cruise control and just sit back and collect the cash, as beatboxes and synthesizers create some sort of droid pop symphonies.

How many great records, songs, and albums never happened because worthy artists didn't have proper label support? How many bands decided to give up touring after staying in hovels and eating rat burgers on the road, because their songs never got the airplay they deserved? Just because somebody can record anytime, anyplace on their little laptops, does not mean they should. Too much junk is clogging the system. Call the plumber! Not enough time and effort is being put into finding

the next artist who could really set the industry straight.

Somebody once took a chance on Frank Zappa and he made a difference in our musical culture. Zappa, in turn, took a band called Alice Cooper and (as a result) they made a series of records that would inspire countless bands and also make some incredibly fun music. Which is what rock and roll started out to be. Music is supposed to make people happy. I didn't say that either; Fats Domino did. Soul used to cross over into pop radio. Country did the same. Pop would mix with R&B. There are no variables anymore. Lines are drawn, dictating what gets played for whom. The culture has taken a few steps back.

So, who cares about Top 40 or popular music? Isn't it just background noise for whatever else we happen to be doing? Is it just something else we listen to in the car along with talk radio? Is Pop Music a snapshot of our lives? If you believe that, don't check out the current hits, 'cause you'll run screaming from the room. Not only has song structure all but disappeared, lyrics are repetitive nonsense. The words are not so much sung, but screamed in your face or performed in a monotone, robot tone. This is not what Phil Spector meant when he said, "Back to mono."

I hate to come off like the Prophet of Doom, but it's just not a good time for pop radio. There is great music out there, but you have to go looking for it and most people are too lazy. If you seek out the good stations, you'll find it, and you'll like it, and you'll tell your

friends about it, and hopefully the word will continue. It has to start with you. That's right, you - the person reading this right now - has to take the ball and run with it. "Popular" means a lot of people like something. Most people like it. It's popular. You understand now, don't you? Wider audience equals bigger airplay.

We want everyone to hear and enjoy great music. We want real singers in real bands, playing real instruments. We want organic music, too. Listen to "Street Fighting Man" by the Rolling Stones. The only electric instrument on that record is a bass. Let's have some more records like that ... "What else can a poor boy do?"

Just remember a funny man who is no longer with us once said, "See this? This is sand. You're in the desert. You can't grow food in the desert. Go someplace where you can grow some food." In other words, find fertile ground. Plant the seeds and watch it grow. Get out of the desert.

On a sad and final note, the music community has lost a great friend. Scott Cornish, who managed to attend countless local and national shows, many in Troy/Albany, lost a battle with Covid on June 5th. Scott was from Rome NY, and he managed to get around everywhere, without a car! He was a fun person and a super fan. He knew everybody and everybody seemed to know him. We will all miss him. Now get out and see a show, even if you don't drive.

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SATURDAY

SUNDAY

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MOTLEY CRUE TRIBUTE

12PM - DESPERADOS
TRIBUTE TO THE EAGLES

12PM - HARMONY ROCKS
ROCK & COUNTRY ROCK

4PM - MONSTERS OF ROCK
ARENA ROCK

1:30PM - TED POLEY
VOICE OF DANGER DANGER

1:30PM - ACROSS THE POND
PLAYING THE MUSIC OF BEATLES

6PM - KISSTORY
THE KISS TRIBUTE

3PM - BROKEN HEARTED
#1 TOM PETTY TRIBUTE

3:30PM - SOUTHBOUND
RENEGADE SOUTHERN ROCK

8PM - RUN RABBIT RUN
PINK FLOYD TRIBUTE

4:30PM - BAD MARRIAGE
TOMMY SKEOCH-GUITAR PLAYER FROM TESLA



SATURDAY @ 2:30 & 5:30
SPECIAL PERFORMANCE IN
THE VIP TENT:

Anthony Corder
Voice Of
Tora Tora

6PM - TRIXTER
TRIXTER

8PM - BACK IN BLACK
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