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November 2024
Vol. 6, Issue 10

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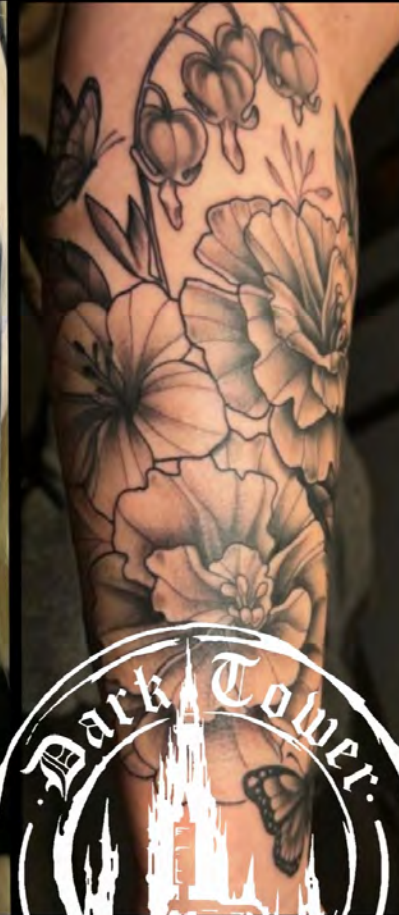
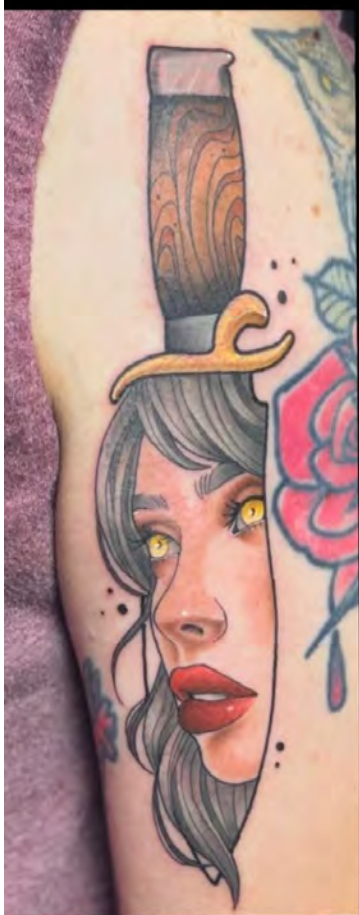
Country performer talks to Rob Smittix about star-studded new album.



Marky Balboa ♦ Rachel Freeman ♦ Seth Rosenbloom ♦ Frying Pan Tower ♦ The Jagaloons

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SARA VAUCHLER



RRX: Lorain, you are the owner of Hilton Music Center, right?

LH: Yep. I've owned it since '81.

RRX: Hilton goes way back. It's really like the heritage music store around here. Remind me how many years it has been. I know it's a lot.

LH: Well, it's funny. I've always kind of guessed, because I'm the youngest of eight, and no one ever gives me the story straight. But since my dad died, I found this little file box and I took it home. Because of you calling me up, I actually opened it and found dates. I got all these DBAs from his various schools and things that he started and the first one I found was from 1948.

He had a school at 91 North Pearl Street - Steuben and Troy Music Academy - in 1957 which he sold to Art in 1959. And then he actually opened up his first store on 52 Columbia Street in 1961. So, thanks for making me do that.

RRX: No kidding. That's really neat. I know they had the Hilton store in Westgate. That was you guys too, right?

LH: Yep. As things got a little iffy around the Columbia Street area, he moved up to 346 and then Westgate and then actually moved up to Colonie Center for five years. And that's where I started teaching. I was just a kid. I was 13. All of us kids taught, every one of us, and there's eight of us. We all taught and that's how ... you know, we went to college.

RRX: I was just at this lunch thing at the Ale House in Troy, called the Troy Music Mafia. I found out that it all really stemmed from, and was based around, Hilton in Troy. And that's how that whole thing started. So you've got that history there too. My own personal history was that I took guitar lessons when I was a kid at the Westgate location.

That was back when I wanted to be the next Eddie Van Halen. And we still need more Eddie Van Halens. You know?

LH: We definitely do. Do you remember who your teacher was?

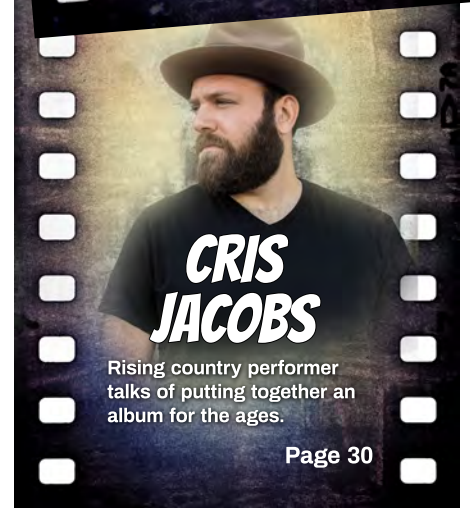
RRX: Glenn Weiser.

LH: It's funny, my dad used to put his students on a station called WOKO.

RRX: I don't know.

LH: That was probably way before your time. I mean, this is going back to when he was teaching. I was young. I didn't even know any of this stuff existed, but the Troy thing was interesting to me. You know what? Mark Galeo actually taught for me as well. So cool to have him teaching for Hilton's again. He just came in one day. He's like, "Lorain, do you think Art would actually come to this?" I'm like, totally. So it was so great to see that article. I also wanted to mention some well-known guys who taught for me over the years and some still do: Matt Smith, Dave Malachowski, Art Bernstein, Mike Campese, Jim Plumadore (Eastwall) Doug Reynolds and the Erotics. Also, as a kid, I took flute lessons with Nick Brignola, only to have him sit in with my band Himalaya decades later at places like the Elbo Room, Justin's, and Chambers.

RRX: There's quite a bit of history there.





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Published by Imperial Broadcasting
in conjunction with
Radiatorradiox.com.



Photo provided.

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LH: I'm the last of the eight; Art is actually 20 years older than me. And people always argue with me that he was my dad. I was like, no, my dad, our dad ... we go back even further than Art and they're like, what? But it's funny, even to this day people come in and they talk about our dad ... crazy stories. And one guy showed me this old pic. I've got to show you this old pic and it's got our phone number from back in the '50s. It was like six digits with letters. I'm like, oh, my goodness, that's old.

RRX: You've got a great location now in the mall and still doing the lessons. Still got all the stellar equipment in there too.

LH: Now we're carrying brands that I didn't carry before; we've got the Fender franchise, Yamaha, Epiphone, and all sorts of recording gear. Our studios are all brand new and beautiful. We've got one of the largest schools around and I've got great teachers.

RRX: I've seen that. Yes, you do.

LH: Being in the mall allows us to get people in that normally wouldn't do lessons. We're getting the older crowd as well as the young kids. We actually have a recital coming up too, on November 9. We do a big show twice a year in the mall with all our students. And that's pretty exciting.

RRX: So that's November 9?

LH: Yeah, I've got a big stage, a beautiful grand piano, and lots of bands. It's loud and it's fun.

RRX: Excellent. And you obviously have been playing for a while yourself.

LH: Oh, yeah. I played flute. My brother John - we were very close, actually our whole family is ridiculously close. But he got me playing jazz, like, in grade five. Later on when I got back from school I got in a band with them called Himalaya, and we played for like, 10 years around the Capital Region. But I was always very dissatisfied with the way the flute sounded. I kinda needed more growl or something. So I had a

paddle board with all kinds of stuff and it was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed that.

RRX: It all comes full circle now.

LH: And my store up in Colonie really started in 2008. I called my brother Bob. We found this beautiful store in Colonie Center and that's kind of where we put our stores together again. Which is great. We moved upstairs by Macy's; that's our new location. Now I'm in business side-by-side with Hilton Piano, which was operated by my brother Bob and passed to his son, Bob Jr. So we're actually two stores in one up there.

RRX: I have to ask. What is the deal with not being able to play "Stairway to Heaven" in a music store?

LH: Oh, that goes back to what, the '70s? We actually allow it now. It's been that long. It's welcome. It's so funny, in a music store, there's always that guy who's serenading his girlfriend and that was the song for many years. People just got tired of it. But we did enforce that for a while but we lifted the ban on "Stairway to Heaven."

RRX: I always wondered about that.

LH: I think the biggest compliment we've been getting in our store is that people say, wow, every guitar is in tune and they're clean and play great. Well, thanks to our tech Joel.

RRX: Anything else you'd want the people to know about Hilton Music Center?

LH: I think our biggest claim to fame with customers right now is that we offer lifetime service on our guitars. We do full setups for free, but I do wanna say, Floyd Rose and the Fender Vintera where you have to take the necks off to do an adjustment are excluded. But every other guitar, we take care of them because, often, those are our students and they might come out of their lesson room with their teacher, "Hey, can you fix this?" And we just take care of it, which is really a great thing. And we also give people a free lesson with their purchases, which is really nice.

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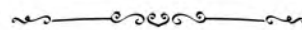
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Marky Klein

Making it safe for liquor, the cops, and a guy named Snake.

BY OP CALLAGHAN

Marky "Balboa" Klein. Photo provided.

Blackcat Elliot have been ripping it up since 2001 with their very own "no holds barred, go for the throat" garage rock-n-roll. For anyone who's listened to their albums or caught a live show, it's easy to see why they've earned their status as a local favorite. Formed from the ashes of North Again, singer-guitarist Gus Hais had previously thought that he was done with music. That is until an old high school friend called him up and invited him to jam.

"Blackcat Elliot is Marky's band. He had to drag me out again to make it happen. When North Again broke up, it was

ugly; lots of hurt feelings and bad blood. I was ready to hang it up, but Marky and I got together, started writing songs, and got Jamie St. Denis (from North Again) to play bass, and that was it. Our very first gig had booze, fireworks, fights, and cops!"

"Mark and I have a musical chemistry," continues Hais. "It was clear on that first jam, and over the years has gotten deeper. He's my best friend and the heart and soul of this band."

Marky "Balboa" Klein was born in Albany, raised in Colonie, and is the undisputed heavyweight champion and driving force behind Albany's own

Blackcat Elliot. He's a great player, a wonderful guy, and this month's feature, so give it up for Marky "Balboa" Klein!

RRX: Welcome pal! Tell us how you got started playing drums.

MBK: My first instrument was guitar. I sucked, so I switched to bass, lol! But 20 years ago, I decided that I wanted to play drums, so I traded a Gibson Black Beauty for a shitty CB700 drum kit.

RRX: That's an awful trade! Do you come from a musical family?

MBK: I guess you could say that. My mother's side has a few musicians and artists in the bloodline.

RRX: Who were your early influences? Was there a specific band or drummer that "hooked" you early in life?

MBK: Peter Criss (KISS) was the first. I remember playing air drums and staring at KISS posters. I may have borrowed a chop or two from Charlie Watts, Dave Grohl, Marky and Tommy Ramone. Neil Peart and Dave Lombardo are pretty great too. John Bonham is my number one.

RRX: As he should be! That's a wide array of influences. Did you take lessons?

MBK: No. I had friends that played,

so I learned from them and just kept practicing.

RRX: Tell me more about that first kit.

MBK: It was a cheap CB700 kit that I traded toward my Ludwig kit that I've been using for years now.

RRX: I recently caught you guys at the Pig Out in Troy, and you were playing a beautiful set of Ludwig Classic Maple. Tell me about your current set up, cymbals, and snare.

MBK: That kit was given to me by my friend and martial arts trainer Rob Grier. The deal was that I had to play out with them. He passed away unexpectedly two years ago. I still have my old road dog Ludwig kit, with a Ludwig Supraphonic 402 snare, and I use Sabian AAX and HHX cymbals. I use a Tama Dyna-Sync kick pedal.

RRX: What was your first band? Tell us about some of your other playing experiences.

MBK: My first band was with Gus, called Dionysus. I played bass in that band and in another band called Under The Bridge. This was long before the Red Hot Chili Peppers song of the same name. I have filled in for a few local bands when needed for a show or two. My cousin Greg Aidala and I play together now and then, and have played a few shows together.

RRX: Blackcat Elliot has been together for over 20 years now. My daughter is a huge fan, and calls it "Gus' Band." Gus says it's YOUR band.

MBK: Ha! Gus and I have been friends since high school. We have played in two other bands together. I started drumming, and when North Again broke up, I pulled him back in and we formed Blackcat Elliot. I definitely got things started, but there is no Blackcat without Gus. We've all contributed to the music, and the band has to agree with everything we do!

RRX: Any gig horror stories?

MBK: A few! The worst was BCE playing in a field, on top of a mountain,

with long grass, 102 degrees. The drum stage was an old boat dock, and Gus and Steve stood on an uneven wooden pallet. I knew it was going to be bad when a guy named "Snake" came down the mountain on a four-wheeler to help us drag our gear up the hill.

RRX: That's not so bad! Sounds better than the first gig with a police presence! Changing direction here, I really like your drum sound. Do you guys record live? Do you use a click track?

MBK: We record live. We want to sound and feel authentic. I don't use a click track, I don't like them. If Bonham didn't think it was necessary, who am I to say different? Hahaha!

RRX: I feel you. Tell me about a favorite recording.

MBK: Blackcat Elliot's new album, "When The Smoke Clears," is my favorite recording thus far. I felt comfortable in the studio, and I think that some really cool things came out of those sessions.

RRX: Tell me about some favorite gigs over the years.

MBK: Blackcat has had a lot of great gigs over the years. The RadioRadioX awards show is definitely in my top three, if not my favorite gig. Opening for the Supersuckers was a great gig. Our release parties are always great. There were a few NYC gigs that were unbelievable. Larkfest was a blast. The opening for Guitar Center was one of our first "big" gigs that we landed. There were over 1500 people there!

RRX: That's great! Anything else you'd like to add? Where can we see you play?

MBK: Check out our music on all digital media platforms and pick up a copy of our new limited edition album "When The Smoke Clears" on vinyl at bandcamp: <https://blackcatelliot.bandcamp.com/album/when-the-smoke-clears>

Blackcat Elliot's next gig is February 22 at Empire.

RRX: I can't wait! See you then!
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BY LIAM SWEENEY

Byrdhouse. Photo provided.

RRX: Can you tell me a little (or a lot) about Byrdhouse? What was the inception of it? Did it start with a concept, or was it the brick-and-mortar first?

RF: Byrdhouse began as a D.I.Y. venue in Albany, New York where I could share my passion for local music by booking dozens of independent bands and artists. Spanning three separate locations, the Byrdhouse was a welcoming environment in which a diverse crowd of music lovers could let loose and show support for their community. Since its inception, Byrdhouse shows have put a spotlight on numerous genres, amplifying marginalized voices to be heard by larger audiences. Though the Byrdhouse has ceased functioning as a venue, its original all-inclusive punk ethos remains intact through renewed booking efforts. Byrdhouse has now evolved into its next stage: an ever-growing conglomerate of creative collaborations moving from stage to stage and artist to artist. Byrdhouse's most popular bookings

include Weatherday, Vial, Horse Jumper of Love, Jigsaw Youth, and Weakened Friends for No Fun in Troy, as well as Guerilla Toss, Mannequin Pussy and Screaming Females for WCDB Albany. On top of booking popular alternative bands, Byrdhouse is also responsible for managing tours and shows for local up-and-comers including Senior Living, Alliteration, Candy Ambulance, and Lemon of Choice. Together, with the support of the Capital Region's many amazing D.I.Y. communities, Byrdhouse has managed to book over 100 shows with no signs of stopping yet. We'll see you at our next show.

As of now, I have worked with the staff of No Fun, Tex of Hey Greasy, and Shane of Super Dark Collective, along with investors to carry the power and ownership of beloved Troy venue No Fun.

Along with efforts towards No Fun, I also work with creatives across the state, including collaborations with Ella Kasper in Binghamton to book and

spread the love of DIY music there. Byrdhouse is growing and collaborating with many like-minded individuals, including our Hudson Valley/New Paltz sister collective Doors at 7.

I wouldn't be where I am without the help of others and collaborating with the DIY community.

RRX: Zeke told us about the Times Union getting her address and basically doxing her and Caesar's Palace. And it strikes me that underground music, a purely benign pursuit, can be seen by the bureaucratic world as some aberration. Can the city do things to help places like Byrdhouse, Caesar's Palace, or Rat Den, instead of trying to shut them down?

RF: For DIY venues, the concern of being shut down by the cops has always hung pretty high above the heads of people who run it. If the bureaucratic world could focus on actual crimes more than trying to shut down venues, and abolish the worry for venue-runners, I believe that the DIY scene would prosper that much more.

If bureaucratic entities step in, to me, it doesn't really seem as DIY to me. But if there were community resources that could help fund and source those running DIY, there could be some benefit to folks. Something to hone the safety and teach those around; a community-helping-community feel.

RRX: I like to focus on a scene, maybe it's the writer in me. So let's talk about two moments having to do with your experience with the underground DIY scene. So far, what was your most beautiful moment? Can you describe it? And what was your saddest moment? Same thing.

RF: Sad: creative spark suffered and as everything suffered, the DIY scene had a huge damper because of COVID. It was truly sad having to cancel huge festivals and shows I had booked because of the pandemic. It felt like I was about to hit my peak during Byrdhouse Basement 2 and it got crapped on. I couldn't see my friends and musicians. It truly was an incredibly sad moment for me. Seeing the

community hit a Great Depression if you will. (Byrdhouse Basement 2 is where I hit my stride as a booker, and seeing all my hard work get trampled on was a hard time.)

Beautiful: brick-and-mortar Byrdhouse.

All the memories of piecing together the venues and coming together as friends who have a deep pleasure in working together to showcase music.

First venue: first show; seeing it all come together and do something we were proud of.

Second venue: favorite venue of the three, where we truly tore down walls and built that basement fit for shows. Sharing all that time with my friends and musicians and getting to know the scene and people more.

Third venue: last show after a festival that was supposed to happen forever ago. Phoenix Fest, all my friends together, and dedicating the last song to Jonah (our friend who passed away two days before the first Byrdhouse show. We dedicated a song to him at the first-ever show and were able to do the same for the last-ever basement show.) The community DIY was really felt at that last show.

RRX: Byrdhouse, Caesar's Palace, Rat Den, Dojo ... it wasn't just for local acts. Bands from the region, maybe from the country, did touring stops. BJ told me about Ben Rowe's "2 Dead Hummingbirds" promotions, said a lot of great bands came through that way. Can you tell me about that, or any other effort to bring bigger acts in?

RF: Yeah, so putting Albany on the map so that bigger touring acts will play Albany is super important to me. We want our favorite artists from all around to come play in Albany. Byrdhouse's focus has been putting a spotlight on local bands and showcasing what our community is about, in hopes of pulling bigger touring acts too, to support and relish in harmony with each other.

RRX: Zeke talked about a lot of the shows going to bars and businesses now, like No Fun and Son of Egg. Do you think it's inevitable when you get successful that you have to move what you're doing "aboveground?" Can the underground shows successfully coexist with traditional shows, like bar shows?

RF: Inevitable might not be the right choice of word or paint the right picture, but I think as venue-runners experience their calling and have a passion for booking shows and being involved, they want to bring it to a bigger setting and evolve a bit. My roots will forever be in DIY, and I would be nowhere without it. I don't think it's inevitable but I think it's a rite of passage for the few that do find it to be their calling.

I truly believe DIY shows are super important to coexist with traditional shows. DIY shows are paramount to keep the community thriving with smaller bands starting off, and for people to get a sense of the roots in the community. I see DIY as the root of the scene, and the bar venues as the evolution of said roots.

RRX: Someone from ESPN somewhat recently said that there was nothing to do in Albany. Some people here defended her statement. What would you say to that?

RF: She's not wrong but she's not right. To her point, with regard to nightlife, she could be correct because the city bureaucrats don't value the nightlife and for places to operate to excite tourists and natives alike. For example, the cabaret license puts a damper on businesses being able to showcase local talent. She's wrong in the sense that we have a great underground community, with shows happening and fun events held by community organizers.

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11/17: Drag Show Brunch -11am Doors/Noon Show

11/23: Brian Kane -8pm

11/27: Thanksgiving Eve Bash w/ The Retridgerators -8pm

11/30: 1994 Shen Class Reunion (Come See Your Friends)

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I Want a New Nugent

BY ROB SKANE

Ted Nugent. Photo provided.

I Want a New Nugent.

Ted Nugent owned a pretty good chunk of guitar hero real estate in the 1970's. He played guitar like he was insane. He sang like he was insane. And, Key-Riest... he even looked insane. Check the album cover photo on "Cat Scratch Fever." Actually, don't, it may freak you out and you'll need time in a safe space with a fidget spinner. Anyway, when rock n' roll was scary, Nugent was next level.

The music was proud and furious. The playing was incendiary, and the Fender Super Twin amps made Uncle Ted sound as loud as an airplane. Derek St. Holmes had a fantastic rock n' roll voice. He kept the vocals "upstairs" - which was standard operating procedure when it came to rocking hockey rinks down to the ground. Let's not forget that St. Holmes was no slouch in the guitar slinger department either. Rob Grange

held down the bottom end on bass and Clifford Davies beat the ever-loving daylights out of the drums. These dudes were blazing. Stormtroopin' through your town and melting faces. They were truly an American Band, ya heard?

September of 1975 brings us Nugent's first solo wax - "Nugent." Brilliant, right? The first two songs on Side One, "Stranglehold" and "Stormtroopin'," just about made my brain melt out of my ears. Either that or it was sweat from the headphones because I probably listened to Side One about a dozen times in succession, who knows... And a year later we have platter number two, "Free-for-All." "Dog Eat Dog" was/is mind-blowing. Fun fact, those first two records went platinum. This was when people brought albums and the FM radio played everything. Yeah, there was payola too, but so what? The records were UH - MAZING.

Saint Ted of Nugent toured forever behind those records and people went bananas when he played. So did he.

Check it, kids, eight months after album two we have the legendary "Cat Scratch Fever" LP. Eight months ... not three years of meditating and chanting the evil spirits out of your Gibson Byrdland hollow-body electric guitar. The Nuge was working it. Playing gigs and writing naughty rock n' roll songs, who said "Wang Dang Sweet Poontang?" He kept on chooglin' all day, every day and everywhere. This record goes triple-effin' platinum, by the way.

So ... three years and three studio albums brings us to the Motor City Madman's finest hour, sorta. "Double Live Gonzo!" Holy buckets of sheep shit, this record is phenomenal. It's got the best Woofah Goofah Mama Toofah-inspired stage raps ever, bar none. "... I know that

ain't nobody out there came to be mellow tonight, now did ya?" And the sensitive and caring dedication of a "love song" to all that Nashville ... ummm. Yeah, go listen to the record, ok?

Uncle Ted was important. He made rock n' roll fun and bawdy and over the top, in a different way than KISS did. He flew around the stage like he was no stranger to Peruvian marching powder, you feel me? He hit the stage, all the time, like a man who spent three weeks in a tree stand eating apples and bow hunting the Great White Buffalo. See, this is what we need now. We need another Nuge. Another Uncle Ted. Let's make rock n' roll absolutely crazy again.

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- 11/15: The Bear Bones Project - 8pm
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Liberty DeVitto

*Billy Joel's
"New York
Drummer"
and time with
McCartney*



BY LIAM SWEENEY

Liberty DeVitto. Photo provided.

RRX: The club was called “My House,” in Plainview, Long Island. You played there, Billy Joel played there, you knew who each other was. Paint for me that scene, that club at that time?

LD: At that time, the club was an underage club. It just served soda; it didn't have any booze or anything like that. And Billy was in a band called the Hassles. I was in a band called the New Rock Workshop. I was 17. Billy was maybe 18. We just kind of passed in the dark because we were both in house bands and sometimes we played together when they didn't have a featured act. Like the Sole Survivors would play there, or Jackie Wilson would play there, and my band would open for them. And other bands would play

there and Billy's band would open for them. And then sometimes they didn't have a big act, and both bands played together, mine and Billy's. So we knew each other from passing in the night, you know, in the dark, just to say hi, that kind of thing.

RRX: I read that Billy Joel was looking for a New York type of drummer when you ended up connecting with him. What's that term “New York drummer” mean to you, if anything? If it doesn't mean anything to you, what was Joel looking for?

LD: No, New York-style drummer. He was living in Los Angeles at the time, and he was using studio musicians to make the records, and a different band to go on the road with him. He wanted to move back to New York. He wanted

the same band to record with him and go on the road with him. And the New York-style drummer thing was, he wanted somebody who was aggressive, because in the live show, Billy was very aggressive in his piano playing, and he needed somebody to be as aggressive as he was. So that's what he meant by a New York-style drummer. Because we live in New York City and ... here, you are very aggressive at what you do, especially in the City. So that's what he wanted.

RRX: Aside from being in the Billy Joel band for decades, you've done sessions work for Paul McCartney, Carly Simon, Stevie Nicks, Rick Wakeman and many others. I would think these people were larger than life, but at the time, they were you're your coworkers.

Can you give me one cool story about any of the people I just mentioned?

LD: The coolest story was with Paul McCartney. I was 13 years old when the Beatles were on the Ed Sullivan Show. So it was prime for me because I had been told by a music teacher when I was in the sixth grade, and I tried to play the buzz roll in the Star Spangled Banner. The teacher said, “Put the sticks down, you'll never do anything with the drums.” So, being discouraged as I was, to live my dream when I saw the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show, I pointed to the TV and I said, “Forget the buzz roll. I wanna do what that guy's doing back there” with Ringo. So now here I am in the studio years later and I'm gonna record with Paul McCartney. And so I'm thinking on the way there, I'm thinking,

“He doesn’t know who I am. He doesn’t really care about me or anything like that.” So anyway, I’m in the control room with our producer Phil Ramone. And the first one that walked in was Linda. This is when he was married to Linda, Linda Eastman. And so, she points right at me and says, “I know who you are. We’ve been watching your videos,” and I was like, “Oh my God, you gotta be kidding me. Paul McCartney’s been watching videos that I’ve been in.” And then he walks in the room and it was like the Dead Sea parted, you know, it was unbelievable. He walked up to me and he shook my hand. He said, “Hi, how are you? Nice to meet you.” And then I had to back out of the control room and talk myself down from the excitement that I actually had just shook the hand of a Beatle. The ones that changed my life and set my course for the rest of my life. Now I just took one of their hands. Yeah.

RRX: You were in the studio. Were you playing at different times, or were you playing together?

LD: We played together. It was myself and Paul and, let’s see, Neil Jason was playing bass, Dave Lavat was playing an electronic keyboard, and David Brown was playing guitar. We were all in the studio together; he was singing. But the greatest part was that we did two songs. After the first song, we took a break. We had some pizza and stuff, and we talked about children, having children, and all those things like that. And then when we went back in the studio again - in between - he would be singing Little Richard songs and Jerry Lee Lewis songs. And we’re playing all those songs, and to hear this voice coming through my headphones, and then be able to look up and see him sitting at the piano was unbelievable.

RRX: Lords of 52nd Street. The Slim Kings. More current projects. When you’ve been where you’ve been, had the experiences that you’ve had, where do you go from there musically?

Where’s the dividing line between breaking musical ground and just enjoying yourself? Is there a line?

LD: Let’s mention the Lords of 52nd Street. First, Lords of 52nd Street sought me out, as Russell Jr and Richie Kada (who played on those classic Billy Joel songs) and I played on 11 of Billy Joel’s albums. The other guys played on the classic songs, like “Still Rock and Roll to Me,” “You May Be Right,” and “Italian Restaurant,” those tunes. So the Lords, we got together because we were inducted into the Long Island Music Hall of Fame. And somebody said, “There’s so many Billy Joel tribute bands out there. You guys are the real deal. You should be playing these songs.” So that’s what we do. We got a guy that does the Billy part. He plays piano and sings; sounds more like Billy than Billy does now. And we put together a band, and we go around and play theaters, and around the country as the Lords of 52nd Street, which is the name that the producer Phil Ramone gave us on the 52nd Street album when he listed the credits. That’s fun because there’s no rehearsal. It’s like, you know how the song goes, let’s do it.

RRX: Last thing is really just, smoke them if you got them. Anything you wanna say?

LD: This thing that is going on, this clinic that I’m doing, Rensselaer at Rocky Music Studio. I’ll be up there on Sunday, November 17, and the doors are at 2 p.m. I will be demonstrating how I created some of the parts for Billy Joel songs. I’ll be playing some new songs and other songs that I’ve played over the years. We’ll also play with a couple of kids that take lessons at the studio, and they picked ‘You May Be Right,’ they want to play ‘You May Be Right’ with me. So I’ll be doing that and answering all questions, and just talking about the business and talking about what it’s like to have the life of Liberty DeVitto.



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R **RRX:** So, how're things treating you these days?

CJ: You know, busy as always between road life and home life. I have two young kids. So there's never a never a dull moment in life, which is good.

RRX: That it is. Yeah, there's gotta be some kind of balance between the road and family. I would imagine that's gotta be tough sometimes.

CJ: It can be. But it's a work in progress and everybody's understanding and we figure it out. There are pros and cons to it. When I'm gone, unfortunately, I'm gone. But when I'm home I get to spend real quality time that maybe working day-job dads don't. So, it's got pluses and minuses for sure.

RRX: Absolutely. Did you grow up in a musical home and do you have a musical home now yourself? With the kids and everything?

CJ: Yeah, I mean ... I did. My parents didn't play music but they were huge music fans and music lovers and had great taste. They were huge Deadheads so they loved the Grateful Dead. My dad had walls of live Dead tapes, you know? And Little Feat, Frank Zappa, the Neville Brothers, jazz, bluegrass, and all that stuff. So, I grew up listening to all that good stuff. My house now, it's definitely a musical house. Both my daughters, they're only eight and five, but they're already taking piano lessons and they love to sing.

They're obviously always hearing me play music and playing guitar. Music is very encouraged; they come see Dad work, and it's gonna be ingrained in them that it's ok to be into it and that's a good way to express yourself. Hoping they follow in my footsteps if they want, but I'm not pushing it too hard. But knowing the joy it can bring

you, I definitely wanna introduce them to it.

RRX: No, that's the coolest - I could relate. So, you've got this new album, "One of These Days." I've been checking it out, but it's got a powerhouse of the features.

CJ: Yeah, man. It came together pretty great. It sort of started out as a pipe dream of wanting to make a bluegrass-centric record. Bluegrass had always been one of my favorite styles of music that really lit my fire as a youngster. I really wanted to learn how to play it and I spent a lot of time trying to play it.

I played in some bluegrass groups before kind of going more electric. But it's always been a huge part of my musical DNA and I just kind of hit a point where I wanted to get back to it. A lot of things lined up for me, where I had recently met Jerry Douglas and I sort of

hit it off with him in a nice, friendly way. So, when I had this idea in my head, he was the first person I called just to ask if he'd produce the record and he said he'd be into it.

We started lining some people up, and then as we were recording and the songs were coming together, we were calling people right then and there saying... "Hey, Sam Bush wanna come in and play a few songs? Hey Billy Strings, do you wanna play on this one? Lindsay Lou and McCrary Sisters ..." It was all organic though. It wasn't like I wanna make a star-studded record. It was just like, I wanna make a record. I wanna make it with Jerry. And then as the songs came together, it's like... what does this song need? And that's how it happened. I'm very, very lucky.

RRX: No, this is very cool. And it was crazy for me because when they sent me your information, I was like ...

this seems rather familiar. When I got your number to give you a call, I went to put it into my phone and I already had your phone number. So, I think this was supposed to happen a few months ago or something and just maybe never did. But now you're actually coming to town to the Cohoes Music Hall, so now it makes even more sense to chat with you. It's a really cool place, I think you'll like it over there.

So what's a Cris Jacobs show like? What's this tour all about and what can we expect?

CJ: It's gonna be great. I mean, we have a monster band lined up that pretty much is set to cover the gamut of my catalog. I have a killer rhythm section that's been playing with me for almost 15 years. And for this tour, I have my friend Jay Starling who plays in Leftover Salmon currently. He plays dobro, lap steel, and keyboards. We're gonna be doing all of the stuff from the new record. Plus, we're still able to

crank it up and do some funky rock and roll. Between all my last few records of music and the versatility of the band, it's become a very dynamic live show where we can break it down to an intimate acoustic song, and then try to melt faces too with some electric stuff. I think it's gonna be great. I can't wait for us to get out there and by that point, we'll be nice and warmed up because it'll be a couple weeks into the tour.

RRX: Nice. So, where's the tour taking you besides here?

CJ: We kick it off down in the Carolinas. We were supposed to do Asheville on Saturday, which obviously isn't happening unfortunately.

But yeah, Georgia, North and South Carolina. And then actually for Halloween week I'm back home doing two nights at the arena here in town with Billy Strings. He's doing a two-night Halloween thing with some special guests and I got the call for that. So

that'll be pretty fun. And then we pick back up the week after that; up your way and then a bunch of Northeast shows and then out to Chicago, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Indianapolis, Cleveland ... it's basically Midwest and East Coast.

RRX: Awesome man. I've really been digging the music and I'm all over the place. I mean, I'll cover a hip-hop show, a jazz show, or a metal show even. Bluegrass kind of gets tied into country, which I love real country, and it took me a long time as a city boy to realize that. I just really didn't like a lot of the pop stuff that's being played.

CJ: No, I feel the same way. Yeah, Merle Haggard, Hank Williams, Waylon Jennings all day long.

RRX: Any day of the week for sure. I just got to thinking because I go out to a lot of these shows and it is my generation "X," some of the millennials, and definitely the boomers that are still around who are really keeping live

music going. I wonder about the younger kids, who don't seem to be concerned about AI creating music and it breaks my heart.

CJ: I hate being the boomer-sounding "get off of my lawn" guy but the AI thing freaks me out. The fact that it can crank out a song that sounds comparable or even better than something that somebody poured their heart and soul into for hours or days is just really troubling to me. I'd like to believe that the heart and soul will still rise to the top. It's the only thing that keeps me going honestly.

RRX: Me too, man. I appreciate your time. We'll see you November 7th, 8 pm at the Cohoes Musical Hall with special guest Daniel Rodriguez!

CJ: Come on out. Like I said, it'll be a dynamic show. There's something for everyone. If you wanna dance, if you wanna cry, if you wanna sing along, if you wanna chill, if you wanna get rocked, it's all gonna happen!

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Singin' Guru

BY JEFF AND CRYSTAL MOORE

Dear Singin' Guru,
OK, I've got a stupid question. I read on a singing school site that pitch matching ability was a prerequisite to join. Is this singing the right note?

Sincerely,

Just Don't Know

Dear Just Don't Know,

You are correct! Pitch matching is singing the right note, but there is much more to it than just singing the "right" note. Pitch matching is a process that

engages the body and brain in remarkable coordination. Let's dive deeper and break this down.

When we talk about pitch matching, what we're really discussing is the alignment of frequency. Sound, at its core, is vibration. So, when a sound is made—whether by a piano, guitar, or vocal cords—it creates vibrations in the air that pulse at a certain rate or frequency. Think of these vibrations like tiny drumbeats moving through the air toward your ear. This vibration rate, measured in cycles per second (or Hertz, abbreviated Hz), determines the pitch.

As these pulses hit your ear, your auditory system translates them into electrical signals that are sent to your brain.

Amazingly, there's a specific area in the brain, part of the auditory cortex, that processes pitch. This is what allows us to recognize whether the pitch is high, low, or somewhere in between.

Now, here's where it gets complex: to match pitch, you not only have to perceive the pitch accurately but also reproduce it by adjusting your vocal folds. These tiny muscles, which sit in your larynx (or voice box), must vibrate at the same frequency as the sound you're hearing. So, if you hear an A4 at 440 Hz, you need to adjust your vocal cords to vibrate at exactly 440 cycles per second. Isn't that incredible?!

And if that sounds like a complicated dance of biology and physics, it truly is!

Many beginners worry about pitch matching, but the good news is that pitch matching can be trained and refined, even if it doesn't come naturally at first. Think of it as a coordination exercise that aligns hearing and vocal production.

To illustrate this with a relatable example, consider middle C. Middle C resonates at around 261 Hz, meaning 261 vibrations per second. A piano, a guitar, and a human voice can all produce this same note at 261 Hz, yet each one sounds distinct. This quality of sound, known as timbre, is what allows us to distinguish between instruments—even when they're playing the exact same pitch. Timbre arises from the unique overtones and resonances each instrument (or



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voice) creates, and it's why we can tell middle C on a piano apart from middle C sung by a person.

So, pitch matching is essentially the skill of tuning your vocal folds to vibrate at the same frequency as the note you're hearing. If you can do this, you've unlocked the first layer of singing on pitch. From here, the next challenge is developing the control and refinement to make it sound pleasing, to add the richness of tone and clarity that we often think of as "singing well."

In fact, with practice, most people can learn to match pitch and improve their ear for frequency in a relatively short time. Think of it like learning to catch a ball or balance on a bike. It may seem difficult at first, but your brain and body adapt with repetition and guidance. So, if you're worried that pitch matching is out of reach, remember that it's a skill, not just a talent, and with work, you can master it.

A simple way to start is to pull up a pitch-matching app – we recommend our pitch-matching app which can be found at www.YourSingingQuestionsAnswered.com. Using a keyboard or a keyboard app, play a pitch and see what the note is. Then sing the note and get feedback from the pitch-matching app. Do this for five minutes a day and you will be matching pitch with the best of them in a few weeks.

Yours Truly,

The Singin' Guru

Dear Singin' Guru,

I know you get asked this question all of the time, but really, can a normal person really learn to sing well? If so, how does all of this work? I like detail □

Signed,

Give Me the Deets!

Dear Mr. Deets,

Let's dive into the science behind this, because singing well is not just about inspiration – it's about understanding how the voice works and how anyone, with enough dedication, can tap into that potential.

The human voice is a muscle-driven instrument. Just like any other muscle in your body, your vocal cords, diaphragm, and even the muscles of your throat and mouth can be trained and strengthened over time. This is why we emphasize foundational exercises like breath control, interval training, and pitch matching. These aren't just things to do to "get better"—they are the very building blocks of vocal success.

Breath control isn't just about learning to take deeper breaths. It's about coordinating your breath with your vocal production, giving your voice the power and stability it needs to hit notes cleanly and with confidence. The science behind this is fascinating: when you control your diaphragm properly, you regulate the air pressure passing through your vocal cords, which in turn controls pitch, volume, and tone.

Next, let's talk about vowel shaping, something that even the best singers have to continually refine. The resonance of your voice changes based on how you shape your mouth, tongue, and throat. Science tells us that the shape of your vocal tract (the space in your mouth and throat where sound resonates) alters the sound waves you produce. By learning to adjust this shape consciously, you gain control over the tone, quality, and even pitch of your voice. This is why we spend time working on vowel manipulation in our studio—it directly impacts the quality of your sound.

Then there's pitch matching and interval training, which aren't just about hitting the right note. They are about training your ear to hear subtleties in sound, a skill that the brain can learn

and improve with practice. Think of it like learning a new language—at first, it seems overwhelming, but over time, you pick up the nuances. Neuroscience shows that auditory training (like learning to recognize intervals) can lead to measurable improvements in your brain's ability to process sound, meaning that with practice, you'll be able to match pitches more accurately and sing in harmony with others more effortlessly.

Now, consider this: we are constantly growing, physically and mentally. The voice itself changes over time. Just because you weren't born with perfect pitch doesn't mean you can't develop a fantastic ear for music. And even if you've struggled with vocal control in the past, it doesn't mean you're stuck there forever. With the right guidance, you can train your voice to be more consistent, powerful, and expressive.

So, coming full circle, if you're wondering if an "ordinary" person can learn to sing "well," science gives us a

resounding yes. Vocal training is an exercise in patience and precision, but the reward is more than just hitting the right notes—it's unlocking a part of yourself that you may have thought was unreachable.

And who knows? That Grammy may not be such a far-off dream after all.

Humbly yours,

The Singin' Guru





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Seth Rosenbloom

From Dream Syndicate to T Bone Walker, a bluesman is born.

BY LIAM SWEENY

Seth Rosenbloom. Photo provided.

R**RX:** Let's start with the moment in your life that you really started playing. Did you start playing the blues on guitar to learn the guitar, or did you play something else on the guitar but then discover the blues later?

SR: It was kind of a little of both. Starting off, I played the violin growing up. My dad was concertmaster of the Boston Ballet, and played with the Boston Pops and Symphony. And my mom played violin, too. So I started on violin at like three or four. And then picked up guitar around 11, right when

the movie "School of Rock" came out - saw that in theaters and was like, "I wanna do that." As a kid, my mom exposed me to the Beatles and Motown stuff; Elvis through my mom and grandmother. I had that blues-adjacent stuff, and the first I really got into was Elvis and then the British Invasion - a little dose of Zeppelin, a little dose of Cream. All that, I usually call it blues-adjacent, where it's kind of blues, but it's not. And from there, I pretty quickly got into a lot of rock and metal stuff. So if you would ask 12 to 13-year-old me my favorite band, it was

Metallica. It was Dream Theater. It was all that stuff, and it was shred guitar, and Guitar Hero stuff. And I think the the turn towards the blues was really when I was 13, and I really wanted to go to a Dream Theater show in Boston at the Orpheum, and my parents said, "Well, no way you're going alone." And my mom said, "Tell you what, I'll take you, I'll buy you tickets if you go to any show that I pick." And they were trying to get me a little less interested in the hard rock and metal stuff and push me in another direction. She saw - I think it was an article in the Boston

Globe arts section of an up-and-coming blues guitar player, Sculler's Jazz Club, the old Upstairs Scholars - and it was Joe Bonamassa circa 2006, probably when he was still playing clubs. And that was the moment where it's like, "Hey, I like that and that's cool." Like I just didn't have a sense of what blues was or could be at that point. And that really sparked it for me. It was still a few years before I totally went that direction. But that was definitely the moment that catapulted it.

RRX: One thing that everybody can agree on with the blues, is that it

has a history. If you listen to any kind of other music, you talk about history, you're talking about a band; this band before that band, all the way to the first band that ever did that. With the blues, you're talking about a crossroads deal with the Devil. You're talking about something that is very biblical. How do you, when you're playing, try to pay homage to that? Like is there a way, through playing, to pay homage to the old Delta, the old Chicago blues, and that tradition?

SR: I think everything comes back to that because as I went down rabbit hole after rabbit hole, I very much feel like I discovered a lot of blues backward, in the sense that I was into Stevie before I was into Albert King. And then listening to Albert King was like, "Oh, that's where all, that stuff comes from." I've often been asked, "Who do you consider the most influential guitar players of the last 50-75 years?" And to me, there are three that changed

the world, totally. The most recent is probably Eddie Van Halen. Nothing was the same after that first Van Halen record. Obviously, Hendrix. But then the one that I always point to, that I think some people push back on, is T-Bone Walker. You can look to others, but without T-Bone Walker, you don't have Clapton, you don't have Stevie, you don't have early BB King. And the way that I look at that kind of lineage, and trying to bring it forward is, I think as any individual artist, you are a sum of your influences. I'm always trying to have my own voice. But when I'm playing, I hear the nods to T-Bone Walker, or the nods to BB King, or the nods to whoever it is. Albert King too, for me. But I hear all those in my playing, and it's the music I love listening to. That stuff I always, you know, wanna try to channel.

RRX: The blues are an evolution. We're evolving from all the people you just said, up to the current day, where

we're adapting their sound and making it new. So let's say that the blues is a continuum. Take any other style of music, whether it was spawned from the blues or not, and if the blues was going a certain way, evolving, what style of music do you think would be the most interesting one that becomes the hybrid of blues and that, like, blues slash it?

SR: That's a really good question. I feel like the one that, at this point, is done plenty is the blues rock thing where it's the mixture with rock. I think if I had to pick my kind of favorites, it's a lot of the R&B and soul blues stuff for sure. And that has obviously been around for a long time, but it really came back into the forefront with some newer artists. I think there's been this interesting thing in maybe the last five years or so, where it's felt like a lot of recorded music - even in country and blues - a lot of genres that were very raw, very real, went the route

of being overproduced and really shiny and everything. And I think the thing that I've seen in both of those in recent years, is this return to not trying for perfection but trying to go for the attitude and the energy behind it. I think there's a lot of crossover there with blues and country that just happens naturally with how they evolved.

RRX: Last question is, uh, what's your sweetest gear combination?

SR: Oh, sweetest gear combination. The number one guitar I've had for almost seven years now is a 1956 Strat. There are a lot of pedals I love and those come in and out. But that Strat, that's been doing it for me for the last, probably almost a year now, and I have it here in California with me right now. I like the old stuff. I like tube amps. And that's the guitar I kinda have bonded with the most, but I'm not the pickiest. I feel like at the end of the day, I can kinda get my sound out of whatever I'm playing through.



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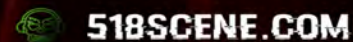


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Prog Digest

BY KLYDE KADIDDLEHUMPER

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Everybody Loves...M - Pop Muzik.

How many of you actually recall that song? A particular time and a particular sound. Very synth and strangely prog for its' time. Some think it is the precursor to Let's Dance – but who knows....

Once upon a time, ol' Klyde and a bunch of college kids (yup, Klyde was a kid once – in college even_) trekked to New York City. Well before it became part of the house of the mouse.... when Times Square was still hookers and peep-shows and dealers and junkies. You know – the good old days from around 1980.

Tower Records was king – and there was Crazy Eddies (Our Prices are IN-SANE), White Castle on every corner and the cheap utility slice.

Of course, there was still disco – and, if you were of a mind – every 12" disco single on the planet was available in Tower. I will admit to actually having a couple 12" Disco hits in the old collection. The Message (Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five), No More Tears (Donna Summer and Babs) and the king (or is that queens) of them all – the Paul Shaffer penned – It's Raining Men (The Weather Girls). I mean, come on, we all have a little place in our hearts for a couple of these. Not as a steady diet, more like a very small, very light, thin mint. How bad could it be when one of the biggest disco labels, Casablanca Records, was also home to KISS.

Well, my friend Bob went a little overboard. Maybe not a little. From that fateful day to this day, long after his untimely

young passing, he is known among us as simply – Disco Bob. We were all unaware just how many 12" disco singles one man could buy in one sitting.

These times and places are what get us here. Now, would I posit that perhaps disco was the Gordon Gekko of the music world? Sure. Did anyone throw The Stones over when they went disco?

No.

Or the Dead – Shakedown Street anyone?

The worst thing about the disco era was, to be perfectly honest, the clothes. Seriously. Multi Inch high platforms. Clothes as likely to cause a major fire as Mrs. O'Leary's cow.....with all the advantages of napalm. Ozone destroying amounts of hair products.

Tailpipe emissions – phooey. Climate change is a direct result of Aqua Net. This is satire people, so don't go claiming that this is fact.

In many ways, this was the seed of that which became known as New Wave. A synth barrage that, again, is reviled in many corners... but it's the hook... and I ran, I ran so far away... that she blinded me with science...

Yeah – and Mozart put too many notes on the page.

Progressive is what you make it. It's not all ELP all the time. Or King Crimson (btw, by account the BEAT tour of Crimson music is the bomb). Or Spock's Beard. Or Edisons Child. Or Hawkwind. It is what you make it.

What do Constant Companion and I both consider progressive? It's when we are driving around and there is a lull in the conversation with her teenage nephew in the back seat. And from his mouth come these now famous (in our world)

words.....

So. There we were. Naked.

Covered in soy sauce...

And somewhere, in a parallel

universe, Mozart is reviled and Barry Manilow has a Nobel for Music.

Until next time.

Klyde

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Frying Pan Tower

Dubbed “The Most Dangerous Hotel in the World,” Frying Pan Tower welcomes you.

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Frying Pan Tower. Photo provided.

We catch up to Richard Neal, of Frying Pan Tower, **RRX:** So, how are you doing today? I hear, I know that the weather is crazy.

RN: Yeah, we do have a little bit of rain going on around here. It's funny, you'll be driving through a torrential downpour, and then about a half mile away, you'll be in just beautiful clear skies, and then boom back into it again.

RRX: So you're not on the Frying Pan Tower right now.

RN: I was able to get off of there the other day, which is a good thing because I had a bunch of stuff to get done back here on land. I'm running around doing that this morning, trying to make sure that we prepare for the next trip, which is just a week away.

RRX: I imagine any time there's even a hint or a whisper of a hurricane in that area, everybody's off of there.

RN: Actually, all the guests are, but I myself - if I have an opportunity to be on the tower for one - I most definitely am out on the tower. Quite enjoyable, actually. Sounds a little crazy, but it's

not.

RRX: What brought my attention to the Frying Pan Tower was an article that said, “Oh, the most dangerous hotel in the world.” And I've read a couple since then that said basically the same thing. Which is awesome; it's a cool thing, it's a selling point. Can you tell me, when you hear that, when they say it's the most dangerous hotel in the world, is that something you push? Is that something that you agree with?

RN: That, ironically, was an influencer who wanted to do a video about it. And I stipulated as long as he didn't say that we were a hotel. He went the other way on it and that was very popular. He had 150 million views across his social media, which included a silly part at the end of me dancing like a crazy old man. I don't want to know if that's what I would be remembered by, but honestly, we have had people stay on the tower as both volunteers and what we like to call eco-tourists. In other words, they know they're gonna rough it a little bit. They don't have to do any work, but they're going to have

basically, for lack of better words, an adventure destination. We will do several things that hotels do; they have their own rooms, they have their internet access, they don't have to bring anything but a toothbrush. And recently we realized that that was a pretty cheap addition. So you don't even need to bring that. So, that's kind of like a wet Airbnb, I guess, although not affiliated.

RRX: So it's not a hotel but it is a destination. We can say it how you say it, an adventure destination. What makes it the most dangerous adventure destination?

RN: Yeah, quite right. It is in the path of nearly every hurricane to hit the east coast in the last 200 years, that we're aware of. It is over, I guess you call it, shark-infested waters. We typically have anywhere from 10 to 20 sharks hanging out underneath us. Lots of big barracudas with huge teeth. The weather and the currents can be very unpredictable. Typically, our currents will go from zero to three knots within about a half-hour, which is not

good if you're out there swimming around in it.

Plus, just make one misstep, turn the wrong way in the wrong place, and you could actually step right off from 75 feet up and fall down to the water all that distance below. And I guess you'd also associate it with the fact that it was originally designed to have a life expectancy of 50 years, and we're just turning 60 this year and doing everything we can to extend its life, so that we can continue to be a research place for scientists, cameras for education, for youth. And quite often, we lend a hand with saving either mariners on boats that are sinking, or scuba divers that are experiencing distress, things like that, heart attacks. And because we have a helipad on top, that makes it easier for the Coast Guard guys to land and just pick up a person, which we did a couple of years back.

RRX: That brings up an interesting thing. In our paper, we actually did an interview with the micronation of Sealand. We interviewed with Prince Liam. Now, you are in international

waters as well. They're more in British waters, but they claim it's still international in some way, but you're really in international waters. Like, have you ever thought of declaring sovereignty?

RN: If you want to know a true story, recently in the last year, I had an interaction where I spoke with them. I reached out specifically because I believe that they and we have some very unusual locations with some unusual characteristics. And they said, "Yes, but you're clearly not serious about it." I said, "What do you mean? I've been doing this for 12, 13, 14 years now." He said, "Well, you have not declared your own sovereignty and you certainly could," and I thought, "Hm, well, true." I didn't wanna say, you know, we kind of did that 250 years ago from you guys already. So we don't need to do it again.

But I did mention, and mind you, this was before the October mess over in Israel and all, that maybe we should "declare war upon each other" so we can have a field day with the press. What a fun thing that would be, right? And he did not seem as terribly interested in that, although I thought it would have been a lot of fun from a marketing perspective of awareness.

But the reason we did not declare sovereignty, honestly, was because this is an old Coast Guard lighthouse and they busted their butt to maintain it, build it, and run it and protect mariners and many, many of the people in this area across the whole East Coast.

RRX: What was your scariest moment on Frying Pan Tower?

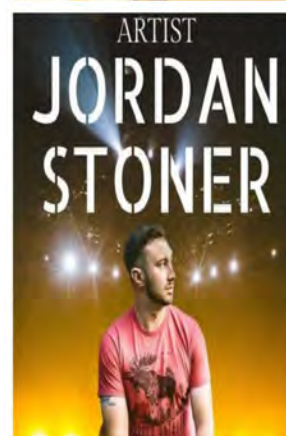
RN: The scariest was when I had three of my four children and a volunteer on the tower. Many years back, probably 2013 or 2014, we had a helicopter scheduled to pick us up right before a hurricane hit. And that morning, rather than getting on the helicopter, we received a text saying that they had metal in their gearbox and they had to cancel the flight. Good luck. And the waves are already 10 feet tall. So we

knew that we couldn't possibly contact any vessel, and we knew it had been through many storms, but we literally went trial-by-hurricane with my three kids. And, yeah, the waves were huge, 30-foot waves going underneath us, winds over 120 miles an hour. And at one point, as we were eating dinner, one of the back windows where the wind was blowing against it directly, it blew in. And so we all jumped up from the table and went back into this room that looked like one of those horror movies where things are flying around. Well, that room, all the pieces were flying around, ceiling tiles are flying around, and we managed to block that window from the inside and we're all soaking wet. And I look over at my oldest daughter who looks very, very concerned, and I'm thinking I've traumatized her for life. I said, "Emily, I'm so sorry," and she looks at me funny and she pulls down the front of the oven. She goes, 'Daddy, my cake fell.' In other words, the change in air pressure caused it to collapse. And so she was upset about that.

So it turned out that my kids are made of tougher stuff than I am. And since then, I've done about three or four hurricanes, but we don't typically take anyone but hardcore researchers out for something like that. Because I was just foolish to invite people into peril, you know, perilous situations. But I'll go.

RRX: Ok. Oh, just for my own reference - how deep is it from the bottom of the thing to the ocean floor?

RN: The ocean water is 50 ft deep and the main structure itself is 21 meters or 72 feet, whichever you prefer, from the ocean top and the very top of the facility is 135 feet above the water. It's approximately 6000 square feet; has basically eight bedrooms in it. And yeah, it's a house. It's a house with a helipad for a roof.



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The Jagaloons

*New label, new
release, whole
new November*

BY ROB SMITTIX

The Jagaloons. Photo provided.

RRX: All right, so we got The Jagaloons on the line, very excited about this. If you can just let us know who you are and what you do in the band.

KS: Sure, this is Kurt (Stegemann), guitars.

GK: Geoff (Kelley), drums.

JW: Josh (Welf), bass.

RRX: Josh Bass (imitating Josh's deep voice), he's even got the bass voice going. I love it! So you guys got a lot of things going on - a new album release, a release show coming up at the Hangar on November 9. So it sounds like things have been pretty busy.

KS: Yeah, we got a little slow start to this part of the year. Josh was in a pretty nasty motorcycle accident, so we kinda eased off on some shows for a bit. Josh is back at probably 95% and playing with us again. So kind of ramping back up. The album we recorded last spring at White Lake Studios.

JW: In Albany.

KS: Brett Portzer recorded that for us. Some delays in getting it out there, but we're with a different label now. It

kind of got fast-tracked and we should have the records in a week or so.

JW: Full steam ahead.

RRX: Yeah. So Josh, sorry to hear about the motorcycle accident. Almost every friend or family member that I have who has a motorcycle has gotten into a bad motorcycle accident. They're dangerous.

KS: The car is a dangerous thing.

JW: Motorcycles aren't dangerous. I like to say I'm dangerous, danger is my middle name. What can you do? I'd like to thank Justin Birk for filling in a couple shows for me.

JW: Thanks Justin. He's a good friend, sax player for Blase DeBris also plays bass. Who knew? Anybody can play bass really.

RRX: I don't know about that. Brett Portzer ... I've worked with Brett in the past. After you get the recording done with Brett ... he's really adamant about going out into the car and listening to it. The car test!

KS: Yup!

GK: Yeah.

RRX: That's always been a thing

with Brett. Although a lot of cars don't have CD players anymore.

GK: It was interesting when we sent the mixes to the guy to master it. A big-name guy out in Los Angeles to master it, and he looked at the waves and he couldn't figure out, why it was already so perfect. He's like, "This can't be right." So, we had to tell Brett ...

JW: Stop being so good!

GK: Give this guy something to do.

RRX: Right. Exactly. Tell us about the new album, what are we to expect?

GK: It's 14 songs. We wrote 11 of them. There are three covers on there. Two of them are more surf songs to start, and then we did a Go-Go's cover. So we're doing "Vacation" on this.

RRX: Nice.

GK: The way the album came together was, we were playing some shows out of town and we ran into a guy. He liked us and said, you know, "I wanna work with you." He was gonna put out our record and that gave us a jump start to write songs and have everything going. So we worked hard to get into the studio. It was April of last

year with the expectation that the record would come out last year. That just didn't work out. So now it's coming out in about two weeks; we're really pumped.

KS: It's gonna be out on Tabu Recordings, out of Indiana.

JW: T-A-B-U

RRX: Well, that's cool. You guys are on a label, and I know that's kind of a weird phenomenon these days because a lot of people are doing it on their own. But at the same time, it's good to have some support and as long as they're treating you right.

JW: We've had a different label experience. We've had different releases on different labels. And they're all different.

KS: I mean, these labels are small independent labels. So it's not like we're getting signed to like Arista or something.

GK: Is that still a thing?

RRX: I don't know. I think so.

JW: We're on the island in Arista.

KS: But it's nice because you're dealing with the people that run the

label, for better or worse. The label that we're with now - really solid guy, he's good to work with. So we're really excited about it.

JW: We're just glad somebody likes us.

GK: Oh, and that's the thing too. We're a niche sound. It's good to be on a label with somebody who knows what you're trying to accomplish and can hook you up with other bands or other related things that can help you just get a little bit more exposure.

JW: Open doors.

RRX: How old are you guys now? You don't have to tell me a specific age but are you in your forties?

KS: Yeah, still in our forties for now.

JW: In our mid-twenties. It's all that partying we do, every day. We look like old men. Probably 45 is the oldest.

GK: I mean, we've known each other ... I've known Kurt since the early '90s.

KS: Yeah. So we've all been in the music scene since that period and we've all been in bands with each other before.

RRX: From when we started in my band we were around for like 17 years or whatever. I know that it only took about two years maybe for the stars to come out of our eyes and to realize we're just doing this because we love it. Do you guys still have those stars in your eyes? Do you have those kind of expectations?

JW: We just talked about labels! We're obviously very big rock stars! Award-winning musicians here. I mean, we're famous. I think that's probably a good way of putting it.

KS: I mean, like I said, we've all been in a ton of bands for years. Probably combined over 20 different bands, I would say.

JW: Coming from the punk and hardcore scene, there's not really stars in your eyes to begin with. I think you get beaten down pretty early to be like,

well, this is just dumb fun. So I think I've continued that attitude my whole life, even with my real job, which is not dumb or fun but I have to make it dumb or fun.

KS: What's interesting, probably out of all the bands we've been in, strangely, this is probably the most quote-unquote successful band we've been in.

GK: I think a lot of it is the past experiences and all the frustrations of having the stars in our eyes, and thinking this is gonna be our next big break. At this point, we're all realistic about where we're at and it's when we have little bits of success ... it's surprising and probably more enjoyable.

JW: Geoff's just really laid back with the whole thing because he's independently wealthy.

(All Laugh)

KS: It also gets back to what Geoff was saying - it's a smaller niche genre of music. So it's a smaller pond to play in. When we're playing punk and hardcore, there's a bazillion bands, you know? It's a little easier to stand out in a smaller scene.

RRX: And with the age thing, I always remind myself that Samuel L. Jackson didn't start his acting career until his mid-forties. So anything could happen.

JW: Yeah, I like that.

GK: That's great.

JW: That's like Danny Trejo too, right? Because he was in jail and s**t!

RRX: Exactly. Yeah, he was definitely in jail and he's got that famous tattoo on his chest.

JW: Yup, Salma Hayek. Put that in there. I'll give you my number. Tell her to look me up!

(All Laugh)

JW: Tell her I'll get a tattoo ASAP.

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