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DIY Underground. Poster by The Rat Den and CZR Entertainment

**Z**eke Motzer was in the courtroom when I first called, and in the seconds we spoke, I had no way of knowing that she was there to see a 21-year-old man get convicted of the murder of a 25-year-old man named Ben Rowe, whose senseless death spoke little of the life he brought to the underground music scene in Albany. He and his apartment-turned-DIY-venue, The Rat Den, were instrumental among U Albany and Saint Rose students, as well as others, in giving independent musicians a stage in some cases, and a chance in all cases.

“[Ben Rowe’s] passing has been tragic for the music community, especially the DIY community,” Zeke said when we were able to talk. “He was very largely at the center of it, especially on the hardcore side of things. He and I grew really close when we started booking together. ... I’d been at it for six to eight months, but we sort of built our communities together and he was very much a leader and very much like a life in the community. One of his biggest talents was making people feel safe and comfortable coming out to shows and getting out of their comfort zone, and being in new spaces and in new situations.”

Zeke, like Ben, operated a house venue called Caesar’s Palace, and she continues with the music, but not the venue. Being a DIY concert space has its challenges, most of all not getting caught. When would-be presidential assassin John Hinckley was scheduled to play Caesar’s Palace, he canceled, and in the back and forth on social media, a local reporter was able to find Zeke’s name and address, which was published, and it led to the city taking action against the venue. It also “doxxed” six college students.

Zeke recounted the result. “It was unfortunate. A few weeks later they came out and inspected the whole place, and I had to go down to the City Clerk’s office and sign some papers, but nothing really came of it,” she said. “And then we just decided to start throwing shows basically everywhere else in Albany. But at that point, there were five or six house venues within a mile of my house. It was like this whole community was there; there was a house show to go to every night of the weekend if you wanted to.”

Another member of the DIY scene is Aidan Hennessey with his venue The Dojo, a multilevel space with entertainment on every floor, including the attic. Espe-

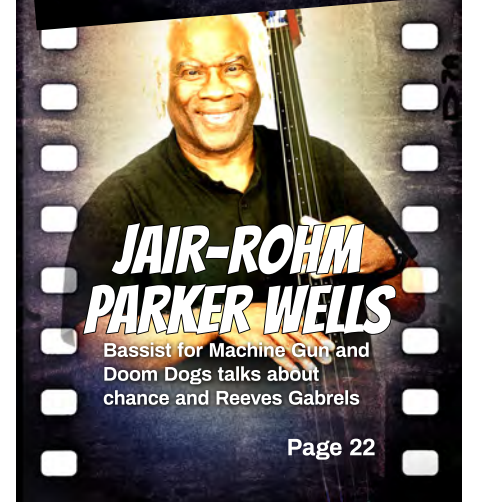
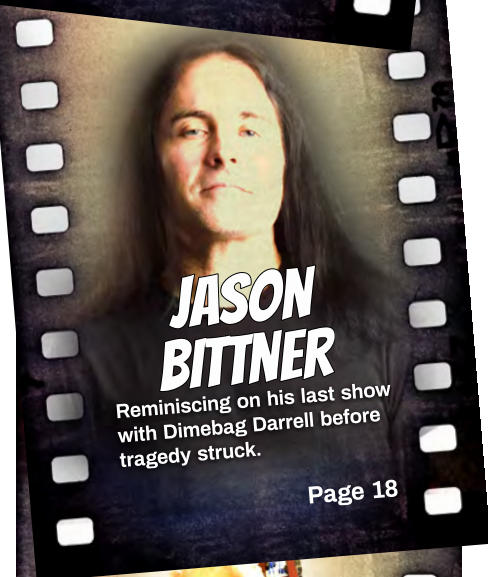
cially the attic.

“Our basement would be sort of like an art show with a couple of different vendors and stuff like that,” Aidan said. “And then upstairs in the attic, there would be music and sometimes we sort of sprinkle in a comedy show. We had a couple of different sort of faces to it. So we had an attic that was just a fully kitted-out stage, and then we had a balcony patio where we could do lighter acoustic stuff. So there were different looks to it. One thing I like to say about the Dojo was you never knew exactly what you were gonna see when you went to a Dojo show.”

The Dojo, The Rat Den, Caesar’s Palace, and the many other houses that make up the DIY scene have to be underground for fear of the city shutting them down. But the relationship between the city and the scene is one filled with more subtle barriers that can’t be solved with a license or permit.

Aidan gives an example. “One thing that sort of comes to mind is those DJ nights under Jennings Landing,” he said. “They were doing these shows that weren’t permitted. And they were kind of getting

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the go-ahead from the city, this sort of like tacit encouragement. Meanwhile, we had punk shows going on at the skate park and those were getting shut down left and right. So there is a certain level of that type of bureaucracy that keeps stuff underground while encouraging a different demo. I'm happy that those folks can do those DJ nights. It's just that because we are young punks, we don't get to play our music outside in municipal spaces, and other people do. So that's sort of one example of that type of institutional barrier."

There aren't as many DIY spaces in the Pine Hills neighborhood currently, perhaps only one, where before there were six in walking distance of each other. But the loss of these venues has come hand in hand with the growth of the scene into more mainstream play. When Caesar's Palace was shut down, Zeke created CZR Entertainment and put on shows in other houses, and eventually elsewhere.

"What really sort of got me involved in the next phase of the music community was us getting shut down and looking for new places to throw shows," she said. "So when Caesar's Palace got shut down, we had, I think, eight shows that we had to move to different places. And we moved some of those shows to other house venues. We also moved some of those shows to Pauly's and then we started throwing shows at No Fun on occasion. Getting shut down as a house venue sort of opened the doors to those other avenues for at least what we were doing at the time. It didn't really feel like we were competing with those venues at all because we were doing something different. We were bringing a whole different crowd than what those places were bringing."

Mike Valente is a talent buyer. He brings top acts to one of the largest independent venues in the Capital Region. He's also been in the underground music scene his whole life, and he shares a

perspective on DIY that highlights the divide between past and present.

"House shows are not new," he said. "It's not a new thing. As a kid, I played everybody's garage, everybody's living room, everybody's VFW, any place I could go just to get the word out, have some fun, party with some friends. But yeah, the house shows, that scene, I'll give you a prime example: I used to do one yearly party, like in the early '90s. And you can't even touch this with a 10-foot pole these days. But I used to do 10 kegs and do \$5 a cup, and I would have a band play, and there'd be hundreds and hundreds of people there. I mean, it's a little bit more extreme than some stuff, but it's been going on forever. If there was a community of kids that like a certain genre of music then you're gonna find some sort of house party somewhere.

He noted a slight difference between then and now, a detail which may have allowed the recent house shows to thrive. "I think it was more dangerous back then," he said. "The cops would break it up a little bit faster than they do these days."

The underground DIY music scene in Albany has a young crowd, and is very different from the mainstream. But Zeke has a broader hope.

"We should highlight the divide between the younger DIY-centric crowd and the mainstay, only-going-to-Bruce-Springsteen-type crowd," she said. "I think that there's a huge divide that really can be swallowed up and erased by building community. I want kids to bring their parents to shows. I want people of all ages at shows. And I love seeing people you never expect to see in a basement. You know what I mean? Like, I think that that's one of the most important parts of community building. Making people feel welcome, making people feel comfortable. That's something that Ben was the best at too. It's like, go up to people, introduce yourself, especially when you're the one hosting the show."



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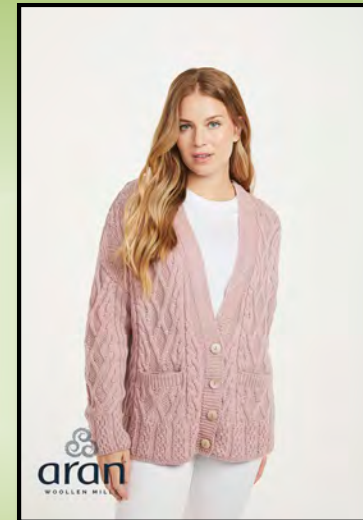
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BY NIKI CHAOS

Mt. Ida Preservation Hall. Photo from site.

I met Michael Easterbrook when renting the Mt. Ida Preservation Hall for the “Moochie the Dumpster Kat” musical premiere. He was easy to work with, and I was excited to learn about how this community space at 548 Congress Street in Troy has been evolving. With a rich history and a small but dedicated group of people, this church has been saved and is being restored as a community gathering and performance space.

**RRX:** Michael, how did you first find out about Mt. Ida?

**ME:** Being a local, I live very close by, and I walk by the church relatively frequently. It has these big red doors, and its architecture is immediately noticeable. One day there were a couple of board members on the front step, and I asked them about what was going on. They told me about the Mt. Ida Preservation Association, aimed at saving the building and keeping it alive for the neighborhood. I had wanted to find a

way to give back to the community, as I had recently moved to the area coming out of college, and this looked like a great way to start getting involved.

**RRX:** I learned the building was saved from demolition. What’s that about?

**ME:** The building itself was built in 1869 and was an Episcopal church up until 2000, then sat abandoned for nine years until 2009. At the time, the city of Troy was going around and looking to demolish neglected buildings for safety reasons. The hall was on the list, and there was some community outcry about this because it’s such a beautiful building with a lot of American Gothic Revival architecture.

In the paperwork that the city was preparing for the demolition, they found a reverter clause in the deed that allowed the church to pass ownership to a descendant of a reverend. And it just so happened that one of the co-founders of the Mt. Ida Preservation

Association, which already existed to fix a historic dam, was just such a descendant. So, the building was able to pass to Brant Caird, and he was able to pass the building on to the Mt. Ida Preservation Association. And that’s when the organization’s work began to focus on restoring the building.

**RRX:** One of the things that impresses me most about Mt. Ida is the dedication of the volunteers. I noticed you have a food pantry. What is the story behind the food mission work you do?

**ME:** We were looking for purposes for the building, and we went through a number of them, but a big year for us was 2016, which was actually a year before I was involved. The group had managed to get the community hall on the basement level fixed up enough to get a certificate of occupancy from the city, which officially allowed it to be used as a functional space.

The food pantry, which used to be

out of the Baptist church just down the road, could not operate there anymore. And we opened just in time to take on the food pantry. That was a defining moment for Mt. Ida, because it embarked us on our community focus. We moved from a historical preservation group to a historical preservation AND community group. That started with the food pantry, and they’ve been with us since 2016. We’ve been happy to work with them.

**RRX:** I think we need community spaces like that. It’s great that you are working to make that happen. On that note, you’ve recently opened the performance space upstairs. What are your hopes for Mt. Ida as a performance space? And what do you have upcoming?

**ME:** I joined Mt. Ida in 2017, and I really liked the community aspect, and I saw that the need was there. At the time, there was still some indecision about which way to go and I think a big



component of community is connection. And what connects people is art. And we had a sanctuary that perfectly lends itself as a venue because there's a natural stage and seating.

We opened our performance venue in April 2024 and established a program committee run by volunteers. Then we put out a call to local artists to make them aware that the space existed and that we wanted to develop programs with the goal of bringing people together and creating community. That's kind of always the undertone of all the performances. It's also what I think is really cool about the organization and being a nonprofit. It's about getting people together and having something special that we can all use and benefit from.

**RRX:** I commend you and all of the volunteers at Mt. Ida for choosing that path and working together to create that space. It enriches our community and our connection with each other. I'm

grateful that you've taken on that work. So, what do you have upcoming? What exciting events are you bringing in?

**ME:** We have so many things. I'll start with the Luna series, a singer-songwriter-based series every month on the Monday closest to the full moon. Usually like the third Monday. The series is curated every month by Natalie Seagriff. She sets up candles, and it's absolutely beautiful. On November 2, we'll be having an electronic and rock music festival called Astral Odyssey. And an event in December where we're bringing in a piano. That event is still taking shape. It's all super exciting. Then on the 14th, we're having a holiday market and that'll wrap up our 2024 events.

Our 2025 calendar is exciting. We'll be doing more work with the Community Rising project and hosting some of their workshops throughout the year. The Luna series will be continuing. We'll be doing a few drag shows, so keep

your eye out for those. But the one I really wanna talk about is a holiday party in January, for the community and Mt. Ida volunteers. We don't want to clog up the December channel because there's already so much going on with the holidays. But in mid-January, we'd like to have a free celebration for the public to attend. The point is to get together and celebrate what we've accomplished so far and everyone who's made Mt. Ida possible. There's an unbelievable number of hands that have made possible what we're doing in one way or another.

**RRX:** How do people get information if they want to volunteer at Mt. Ida?

**ME:** The best way to keep track of what we're doing with events or get involved is to look at our posts on Facebook and Instagram. Send us a message and we will be happy to connect with you.

We have a lot of different ways that you can be involved. We have the program committee if you'd like to bring a

show to Mt. Ida, or you could join that committee to help somebody else bring a show to the space. We have a history committee that is working on getting the building added to the National Historic Register and also a fun group to hang out and learn about the history of the neighborhood. And we have all sorts of other committees that are focused on repairing the building and keeping it nice. And the food pantry, of course. There are lots of volunteer opportunities at Mt. Ida and we love to get people from the community involved.

**RRX:** Readers can stay in touch with Mt. Ida on Facebook or Instagram. This is a very special incubator for creativity and community engagement! I encourage you to check out the Mt. Ida website, follow them on social media, and check out future events or volunteer opportunities at [mountidatroy.org](http://mountidatroy.org)

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# Shred Flintstone

BY LIAM SWEENEY

*Thanks for Asking!*

**RRX:** Music genres are difficult for some artists. Some strictly adhere; others not so much. What is your perspective on the genre you play, or the genres you hover around?

**SF:** I don't keep Shred Flintstone limited to a specific genre. My music taste is all over the place and so are my creative inspirations. Some days I want to play heavy loud attitude driven rock music, other days I want to make sad melodic emo music. I think people limit themselves by feeling the need to adhere to specific genres. I mean, if that's your thing and you've found a niche that works for you, that's awesome, you can build a career on that. But what has always motivated me is wanting to do something completely unique.

**RRX:** Our style comes from the extension of our influences. It's like an evolution. We're influenced, and it inspires us to influence. What can you say about your influences, and what you feel you've done with their influence as a musician or band? Have you extended their work?

**SF:** What influence me varies depending on changing phases of my life. I'm influenced by minimalists usually. People that make huge impactful songs and performances with very little. The Ramones were kings of minimalism. The Stooges. The Hives. It's all just power chords and attitude. At the moment, those are really the only bands I'm drawing influence from in my writing. No offense to all the other music out there but I only want to be influenced by the best of the best, and right now I'm on a rock kick. I also

love great minimalist painters. The more childish the painting, the better usually. Our subconscious minds are so powerful, the best artists know how to get out of the way and let that channel speak through them. David Choe has this great YouTube channel I've been watching, he's been inspiring me to paint.

**RRX:** Artists, musicians, we immortalize. We set it in stone. Is there anyone who has passed that you feel you have immortalized in your work? If so, can you tell us a little about them?"

**SF:** Jimi Hendrix. I don't know what universe he came from. But in the brief amount of time he was here, he completely changed the way an entire instrument and genre of music was played. I think about him often, particularly in live performances. We both play left handed too, I've always felt some unexplainable kinship to him.

**RRX:** What do you think is the most poorly understood thing about music, or the music you play?

**SF:** I don't think the collective realizes how important music is to our survival. We take it for granted, it's just there all the time, everyone knows music and hears it every day. But do we fully comprehend how important it is to us? Like what would the ramifications be if the world did not have music? I think we are musical beings. It's in our nature somehow. It's inseparable from us. It pains me to see the vast extent to which music can be commodified and made into a soul-less product in today's world. We've completely normalized and accepted it, but

it is wrong and it has to change. I'll just keep doing my thing and playing a part in making that change.

**RRX:** We all get a little support from those around us. And we also can be impressed by our fellow performers. Who do you admire in your community, and why?

**SF:** Right now, I really admire my band mates Caitlin, Lucy, and Taylor. They're so good at what they do and are each creative power houses in their own respects. I feel incredibly fortunate that they choose to give their

time to this project. They've kept it going.

**RRX:** Let's talk about your next project, your next few. Just not the ones you're working on now. The ones you have your eyes on for the future. What's coming to us?

**SF:** We're going to make a really badass rock record, like no messing around type beat. Full throttle to the wall. All killer no filler. We're coming for everyone. It's going to blow people away, don't sleep on Shred Flintstone.



Shred Flintstone. Photo provided.



# Jason Bonham

*When music is the family business*

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Jason Bonham. Photo by Rachael Skinner

If you don't know who Jason Bonham is, you hold the unique position of living under a rock in multiple generations. Bonham is an accomplished drummer in multiple projects, and, as the son of the late legendary Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham, a standard bearer for rock itself.

I had a chance to talk with Jason.

**RRX:** You're coming to the Palace Theatre on December 4 with "Jason Bonham's Led Zeppelin Evening." What are people gonna get that they couldn't get from a really good tribute band and also couldn't get from a reunion show?

**JB:** Well, good question. If people have seen the show before or been following me while I've been doing this, this journey of JBLZE (as we call it now) - the fact that we are 14 years in when I only originally wanted to do one tour - it's proved to be a wonderful experience. We're all getting older together, and it

was something I promised the audience every year when we did it. I said, "I'll keep doing this for as long as I can play it and as long as you want me to," and I said, "Let's grow older together." So we've been doing that, and it became like a little family. We had a couple of small changes about seven or eight years ago and actually gave it a new lease on life when we changed it from "Experience" to "Evening." And that was with the Japanese guitar player, "Mr. Jimmy" Sakurai. He is a breath of fresh air, and his knowledge of all the Led Zeppelin stuff is so amazing, all the live stuff. It really opened my mind to be able to take the show a little further, and I promised that this time around, we wouldn't stick to the script. We would try to change things up, and we're gonna bring back some of the songs we did on the first-ever tour, which are songs like "Dazed and Confused," the full-length versions (and I say full-length like "The Song Remains the Same"

versions). So they're 22 minutes long, a lot of things going on in them. Also, a friend of mine kept challenging me to try "Achilles Last Stand." It's a song that I've kind of steered clear of 'cause I never thought we did it good enough, but I'm willing to keep trying and get it to the point because it's such an amazing song. So yeah, we're gonna have some fun. There's some new stuff in the show. Definitely.

The show is long. The difference from anybody else doing it is that this is something I've grown up with all my life. I've been around those boys; my dad was who he was, but it's just a feeling of family and sharing the stuff and the stories, they tell a few things about what it was like growing up with Dad. And that's why it became more of an evening with me, and talking about some of the greatest music ever written. So if you're coming down, you won't be disappointed. Plus, it's a lovely part of the world. I was there

recently in the summer, so I look forward to it.

**RRX:** I did watch a few of them on YouTube. I was sitting in here for a couple of mornings having a blast. It was great, it was a really good time. So I have seen them.

**JB:** Thank you very much.

**RRX:** This ties into what you were saying, ties into a couple of questions I had. You were originally gonna do just that one tour of JBLZE, and then you decided to extend it. What went into the decision to extend it?

**JB:** Well, after we did the 28 shows (which at the time was all we were gonna do), I was thinking to myself, you know, "This is too good." I thought that we hadn't played to enough people. There were still a lot of people saying, "Well, why don't you come here? Why don't you come there?" and I said it's not really my decision to stop this. I said we will do it as long as people want to see it. So I kind of

put it out there to the agent and the people that were in charge, and there were lots more offers that came in, and it just kept on growing, but growing organically; we never went out and did massive press releases, and we don't really do that. You know, it's not like we're promoting a product. We're not trying to sell anything other than "come to the show and enjoy yourself." If you love that, then you'll have a good time. So that was the cool thing about it. It naturally grew in a nice, organic way. And we got to the point where people in Australia were asking us to come and play, and then we got offered to do some tours with different artists, and I never imagined doing JBLZE as ... I always thought it was gonna be a storytelling video wall of movies. Once we took it to the outdoor sheds and we did some shows with Foreigner and Whitesnake, and then Foreigner and Cheap Trick, I suddenly went, "This is a lot of fun," and we did the Peter Frampton tour in 2019. And then, just recently, we got to do some shows with Billy Joel, which was phenomenal, and he's a huge Zeppelin fan. So that was a real honor to do that, to go and play a stadium, open up with Billy. And then he says, "You can't leave. You have to watch my show too because you're gonna be playing a Zeppelin song with me." And he's such a sweet guy, such a great time. It's got to the point now when I just feel very humbled by how much people still love to come and see the show 14 years down the line.

**RRX:** Wow. Funny thing. We just interviewed [former Billy Joel drummer] Liberty DeVitto.

**JB:** Alright.

**RRX:** Yeah, we just interviewed him. I got an invite to go to a drum course that he's doing right now over in Rocky's Music Studio in Rensselaer, which is near here. So I'm gonna go see him. So that's cool.

**JB:** Well, send him my best.

**RRX:** I will. So now JBLZE is out there, and nothing's performed in the

vacuum. No shows are performed in a vacuum. If you were a Led Zeppelin tribute band, you play your heart out, and there's some guy at the end of the bar, he's got a Led Zeppelin T-shirt on. He walks up; he's got something to say because that's every bar. But it was your show. If you do a show somewhere, that person sitting at the other end of the bar might be Robert Plant coming up to say something to you. Have you gotten any kind of encouragement or advice on the show from anyone in the band?

**JB:** No, I mean, the weirdest thing is, it's quite a few years ago now, I remember mentioning it to Robert, and he said, "Well, you know, you do what you're gonna wanna do." He goes, "You know, there are other things," and I went, "Yeah, I know, this is just one thing I do." And he goes, "Yeah," and he goes, "And why not?" He said, "Your knowledge of your dad's music and our music is ridiculous." He said, "So enjoy." So I remember talking to his keyboard player. I went to see Robert play the show, and we were playing the Greek three days after he played, and he [the keyboard player] said to me, "You know, he watches your clips on YouTube. He might not tell you he ever does, but he does." And at the Greek, he said to the audience, "Hey, is anyone going to see Jason Bonham's Led Zeppelin Evening in a few days?" and some people cheered. Yeah, he goes "OK. Well, that's how it used to sound, and this is how it sounds now," and he went into a Zeppelin song. So it was very funny. I found that very complimentary in a way. The best is the Warner Chappell thing, one of those things online which finds if music is being used without permission. I can always tell if we do a really, really good job, they think we're using Zeppelin, so they take down a clip. And that's the best compliment ever, but then you start going, "Why aren't your other songs good enough? Why aren't you taking this one down, you know?" So there must be some kind of computer program that says when it's being used. And it's, that's the best compliment ever.



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BY JESSE SKINNER

Damageplan/Shadows Fall. Photo provided.

**D**ecember 5th, 2004 is a day that will live in infamy amongst the metal community. On that fateful day, an iconic guitarist by the name of Dimebag Darrell Abbott was murdered on stage in front of his fans and bandmates. A few days before, his band Damageplan visited the Capital Region to perform a show of epic proportions.

Pantera officially broke up in 2003, leading guitarist Dimebag Darrell Abbott and his brother and bandmate Vinnie Paul to start another band named Damageplan. Once established, Damageplan released an album titled "New Found Power" and vigorously toured. In the fall of 2004, they were scheduled to tour with Shadows Fall and the Haunted.

Jason Bittner, drummer of Shadows Fall, stated, "One of probably the top five tours I've done in my entire touring existence, which is now going on 30 years." He said, "The whole tour was great. Obviously, Dallas was insanity because it was the home of Pantera. It was epic!"

A local radio station announced a Christmas show at Northern Lights in Clifton Park, NY, with Damageplan and Shadows Fall - a date that wasn't on the original touring schedule but was added

on along with a few other shows leading to the holidays.

Bittner stated, "The only reason the Haunted wasn't at Northern Lights is because the actual official tour ended the day before, in New Jersey." And that, "We came back up to Northern Lights because we're going back to Massachusetts." He also said, "Damageplan was coming back this way because they're going to Texas, they're going to play some shows on the way back home. So we did this Northern Lights show together."

Once the night of December 5th, 2004 commenced, the onslaught of stage antics began, with Dimebag at the forefront. Equipped with what would be goods from a Spencer Gift store, Dimebag hazed Jason and Shadows Fall during their performance, shooting silly string and baby powder out of an air gun at the band mid-performance.

"So first of all, he sneaks up behind a monitor, and he's just hanging out watching us play," Bittner recalled. "Just something about the way he was; like, I don't trust him right now. So then I felt this gust of air over my shoulder. So now I can't see him because he strategically placed himself behind the monitor. Then,

over my head, over the monitor, comes the gust of wind, followed by this shower of baby powder that has now encompassed me and my drum set. He's behind there, laughing his ass off, and when I realized what's going on, the silly string comes out. Then the rest of them are on the side of the stage, and they're just dousing the shit out of us with silly string. I still have a cymbal that I have up on my memorabilia wall from my kit off that tour, and I left the silly string on it."

Once Shadows Fall was finished with their performance, the stage crew started to set the stage up, and Damageplan began their set. Performing most of their new album in the first half of their set, they started playing Pantera classics, getting the crowd in an uproar. At one point, they invited Jason onto the stage to play drums. Unbeknownst to Vinnie Paul, Jason was backstage preparing for this moment.

A few days leading up to the event, Bittner stated, "I said to Dime, I got this idea. I don't know if your brother is going to get upset. I was going to dress up like your brother in Albany and come up and play 'Walk.'"

"Dime just starts cracking up, he looks

at me. He said 'you absolutely have to fucking do that. He's not going to get mad.'"

Backstage, preparing for the ordeal, Jason and his bandmates found it hard to compose themselves for the occasion.

"I was standing in the dressing room at Northern Lights. I was trying so hard to put the electrical tape on my face, I was laughing so hard; every time I'd look up in the mirror and see the rest of Shadows Fall, Jon's crying behind me. We're just like, this is ridiculous, it was so good," said Bittner

Bittner was welcomed to the stage dressed like Vinnie Paul with a bandana tied over his head, Damageplan work shirt on, and (of course) the black electrical tape on his face to portray the iconic Vinnie Paul beard.

"When you see the Mini Paul footage, when they flash over, and he looks over and sees me there, there's a quick moment where he just rolls his eyes real quick and was just like, 'Oh you mother-fucker,'" said Bittner. "Pat (Lachman) dubbing me 'Mini Paul' was what made it magical. We had no idea that was even going to come out of his mouth."

After the guitar solo in the song

“Walk,” Jason handed the sticks back to Vinnie Paul. Vinnie then finished up the song and, eventually, the set. An absolute banger of a show. By the end of the show, it was more of an actual party than a rock concert. Being front row, it seemed like you were living within one of the 3 Pantera Home Videos, but nothing lasts forever.

Jason said that the show was “bittersweet.” He stated, “We said our good-byes during the day. [Dime] had been asking me for a pair of sticks for like 10 days, before the tour ended. He’s like, ‘Hey! Make sure you give me a pair of your sticks before the tour is over.’” Jason then told Dime, I have something better than that!” Then he proceeded to give him an 8” Splash cymbal before the end of the tour. Due to prior engagements Jason was unable to hang around after the show at Northern Lights was over.

“I was pissed off I had to go to jury duty the next day.” And he stated, “I can’t believe I can’t stay here and hang out and

party,” Bittner said. “This is bullshit!”

Jason got all his equipment packed up and was rushing out of the venue. Everybody had plans to see each other at the Guitar NAMM show in January, only a month away. Jason located Darrell at the bar and went to say farewell.

“I remember vividly, I walked up to the bar, and he was holding court with people. I walked up to him, and he was like, ‘What are you doing?’ I’m like, I got to go. I got jury duty, dude. He gave me hugs and he’s like, ‘I’ll see you at NAMM.’ Kissed me on the cheek, and that’s it. That’s the last thing he said to me, so I remember it well.”

A couple of days later, on December 8th, 2004, at the Alrosa nightclub in Columbus, Ohio, a gunman stormed the stage during the intro to Damageplan’s set and opened fire on Dimebag Darrell, killing him instantly. A total of four people were killed and multiple injured. The gunman was killed by an off-duty police officer. The metal community mourned

the loss of Dimebag for years to come.

Bittner exclaimed, “I’m not trying to maximize this or make it bigger than it was, but for me, and for the metal community, this is like saying, ‘Yeah I remember where I was when Kennedy was shot.’”

On the day of Darrell’s memorial service, emotions were high. It is well known that Eddie Van Halen famously placed his original Van Halen II guitar in the KISS casket with Darrell. But what was not known, under the blessings of Rita and Vince, is that they chose to place the 8” Splash cymbal in the casket, that same one Jason had previously gifted to Dime.

Bittner disclosed, “I walked up to it [the casket] and I literally collapsed to my knees sobbing. And then Vinnie Paul picked me up off the ground and brought me over to the pew and I said, ‘I can’t believe that’s in there (referring to the cymbal next to Dime),’ and Vinnie said ‘I told you man, he loved you.’” Jason

said he was “like, totally, blown away.”

Bittner said, “We didn’t know those guys for long. Like we had met them in passing before. They could have been the biggest rock star pricks, but they weren’t, they were just these awesome guys from day one.”

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Damageplan and Shadows Fall show at Northern Lights. A show that will go down in history as one of the last performances from Dimebag Darrell. This show was extra special for myself, because I was in the front row and in front of Dimebag for the shows entirety.

If you would like to see footage of this show, Shadows Fall’s “The Art of Touring” DVD has a dedication to Dimebag, and the video of Jason playing “Walk” dressed up as Mini Paul.

When asked, “Did you receive any real advice from Dime and Vinnie before they passed?” Jason replied, “Yeah, keep doing what you’re doing, and make sure you have fun while doing it.”

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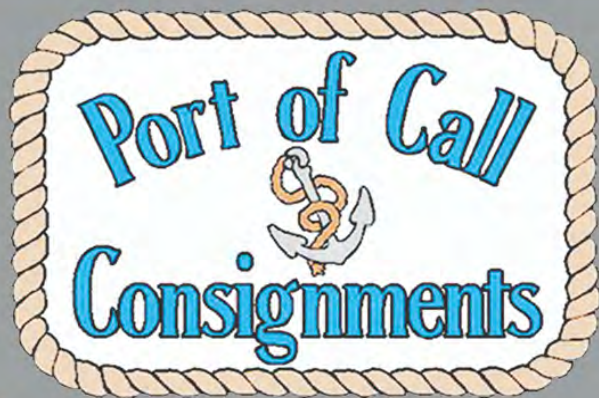
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# Jair-Rohm Parker Wells

*A chance encounter with Reeves Gabrels starts a forty-year journey.*

**BY ROB SMITTIX**

Jair-Rohm Parker Wells. Photo by Mitch Levine.

**R**RX I am very excited about the Doom Dogs, and I know you guys are coming to town, to our neck of the woods, on January 8 to The Troy Savings Bank Music Hall. So, if you don't mind, just a brief history of how Doom Dogs came to be.

**JP:** Well, thank you for asking. It's a fun story. It basically started at the end of the 1980s, when both Reeves and I, who were unknown to each other, were endorsing Steinberger guitars. And as endorsers, we were invited to demonstrate at the Frankfurt Musik Fair on behalf of Steinberger. We were both doing our separate demos. At one point during a break, we happened to meet in the Steinberger booth and started chatting. Reeves had been demoing with a

DAT tape; he was playing along to it, and he was getting pretty bored with that. So, he asked me if I would be up for joining him on his next demo set. I said, well, sure, why not? What will we play? He was with Bowie at the time, and I didn't really know any of that material except for the older Bowie material. I didn't know the new Tin Machine stuff. So what will we play?

He said, "I don't know, we'll see when we start." So we just went up there and improvised, and it clicked. It was happening! Fast forward to some weeks or months after that; we stayed in touch after the fair and figured it'd be a good idea to get together and do more of that in front of more people. A proper audience, like, make a band of it. At the time,

I was living in Sweden, and I had my band there, that included the drummer Bill Bryant, who I had worked with in Machine Gun.

**RRX** Right.

**JP:** I suggested to Reeves that we do a trio with Bill, and that would alleviate the need to have to bring over two guys from the US because Bill was there in Sweden as well. And that's how it started. We started playing in Europe, pretty much any and everywhere we could - whenever David was working in Europe, he would have Reeves over with him. That gave us the opportunity to be able to play more. Then it turned out that I started coming over to the US more to do shows, mostly in the New York area, like at the Knitting Factory and

whatnot. In that context, I became acquainted with the drummer Lance Carter. So Reeves and I started playing with Lance because, in the US, it was easier to just work with Lance and not have to go through all the trouble to get Bill over there. Back then and to this day, Bill had a very successful business in Sweden. So it wasn't easy for him to get away. So, yeah, we carried on, on both continents.

Between Bowie tours, essentially, Lance was with Cassandra Wilson at the time. We were really fortunate that Cassandra and Bowie were in Europe at the same time once. That gave us an opportunity to do a bigger thing and spend more time together.

**RRX** It started way back then, but if

I'm not mistaken there was a hiatus in there. Right?

**JP:** Oh yeah, a few things happened. First, Lance passed. I don't know if this is actually chronological. It's just that was one thing that led to the slowdown. Reeves moved from LA to Nashville and also stopped playing with Bowie. Things became kind of complicated for him because getting him over to Europe wasn't as convenient anymore, and for me, coming over to the US. I was touring with a Swedish act that was really huge at the time, an act called Dr. Alban. So that took up, like, all of my time. And, like I said, Reeves was in Nashville working really hard to establish himself. So, we didn't really do a whole lot for a few years. We kept in touch and looked for ways to get together, and then he started doing the thing with the Cure. He ended his relationship with Steinberger essentially, when he started his relationship with Reverend Guitars. He was doing a whole other thing with Reverend; he was basically designing guitars. It was a much deeper commitment than just being an endorser like I was and still am with Steinberger. That kind of put us in separate worlds entirely; that was basically the 12-year hiatus.

**RRX** That makes sense. I mean, I have a hard enough time getting my band together, and we all live around here. So I get that. I'm really into the whole "no shows are really gonna be the same," improv things Doom Dogs does, I love that!

**JP:** Oh yeah, that's the way it's been from the beginning. It goes all the way back to that first conversation with Reeves, and that's been the process ever since for, like, 30-plus years now. We don't talk about the music; we play the music.

**RRX** Right, you let the music do the talking for you.

**JP:** Exactly. the recent incarnation started ... if I'm not mistaken. It was July of last year. What happened was Reeves and I discovered that we were

both living on the East Coast again, and it was like, dude, let's get together, let's do Doom Dogs. We were looking for drummers. I had done a record with Grant Calvin Weston around that time, and he was the first choice for both of us. Unfortunately, he wasn't available. We kind of sat around thinking, there are a lot of great drummers out there, and then I was like, there is a drummer I've been a fan of for many years, I'd like to call him and see if he'd be up for it. So, I called Jonathan Kane.

He said, "Yeah, great, sure, I'd love to!" He made the gig ... that first show was at ShapeShifter Lab, Matthew Garrison's Place in Brooklyn. Beautiful place. And the story is ... up until this point, we're at the venue, we're setting up. I noticed Jonathan, whom I'm just meeting for the first time at the show, because, like I said, I've been a fan. I've never met him. He looks nervous. I figured, well, he doesn't know us, so maybe formal introductions are in order.

So, minutes before we go on, he comes over to me and says, "Listen, what do you want me to do?" There is a Doom Dogs album from the '90s. It's the only album; we're actually getting ready to release a second album with Jonathan on it. He's still like, "What should I play? What do you guys do?" He's asking all these questions ...

**RRX** Sure.

**JP:** I realized, oh, he thinks that this is some kind of worked-out thing, where there's a formula and whatnot. And I told him, I said, "Listen, Jonathan, you're here because I'm a fan. You're just here to do what you do. We got on stage and he totally went above and beyond the call of duty. I mean, he was fabulous. So that's the way it is, the way it's been and that's the way it's going to be."

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# Rock n' Roll

BY ROB SKANE

**R**ock n' roll is a vicious game - if you know, you know. But we love it. Playing it, listening to it, arguing about it and even dreaming of it. No lie, not too long ago I had a dream that I was onstage just about to play guitar with Bruce Springsteen. This was 1978 Bruce. 3 hours and 35 minutes Bruce. All duded up for Saturday night Bruce. Of course, I asked if we could play the 'Detroit Medley' - I mean, who wouldn't want to play that one with the Boss? I was even hoping he was going to include me in one of his stage raps too, you know - '... and it was me and Rob, on the boardwalk - and I said, hey Rob!! You wanna... you wanna go get a cheese sandwich?' Anyway, my dream was destroyed when I woke up. But isn't that always the case?

Rock n' roll flows from instinct, not intellect. The crazy rhythms tear your soul. Lyrics somehow drip into your subconscious, and you don't even know if they're the right ones or not. It doesn't matter - they're there. One of my favorite misheard lyrics came from a friend of mine. He heard KISS sing '...I wanna rock and roll all night, and probably every day...' - I mean, it kinda makes sense when you think about it, right? 'Look, we'll rock all night, but, dudes, I work in the morning... so, I can't do every day - I mean I probably can. I gotta find out though, I'll let you know.' And while the wrong lyrics are often much cooler than the right ones, that typically doesn't work with guitar chords, and I speak from experience...

Rock n' roll will make you stand in line in the dead of a Northeastern winter hoping to get concert tickets.

Sometimes you got them, other times it was 'that's it, go home,' the show just sold out. Stop shivering and get the hell out of here. That happened to a lot of us back in the dark ages of paper tickets, cash money and 8-track tapes. But we were committed, man - we kept on truckin'. We lived it and breathed it. The music hit something inside us that we didn't even know we had. So, we stood in line for the only bands that mattered - to us. And that was about all we stood in line for when we were young, loud and snotty.

Rock n' roll and the love thereof, can make you do some crazy things. Like start a band. Write songs. Fall in love with the fantasy of making a difference. So you play gigs in one toilet bowl rock n' roll club after another. Here we are, where are we? And if the natives were restless enough, you might have had a place to lay your weary head after some extracurricular activity. Otherwise, you slept in the van - if you had one. Motel?! We're driving it!

Rock n' roll has dictated fashion. We have all dressed like our heroes and we know it. Did I track down a white denim jacket because I saw how cool Paul Westerberg looked in his? I did. Did I look cool in mine? I did not - not even close. I looked like I should have been working the counter at Baskin-Robbins. Black Jeans, skinny ties, Doc Martens and so it goes. They looked cool onstage and we thought we looked cool in the crowd. Win-win? Not always, kids. But it was all part of our rock n' roll fantasy.

Rock n' roll ain't noise pollution, it never forgets and we like it, like it - yes, we do.



# Prog Digest

BY KLYDE KADIDDLEHUMPER

**H**owdy kids and kidette's... Your old Unkle Klyde here. I'm easy to recognize – I'm sitting in the Barcalounger in the corner. You know, the one with that nasty plaid fabric. I'll be wearing a pork pie hat (thank you Mingus for a fantastic piece that is as old as I am), that ratty old sweater, chomping of a nasty, cheap cigar and telling off color jokes in front of the kids.

At Thanksgiving time – Constant Companion and family have a holiday tradition. Well, I am uncertain tradition is exactly the right word – but close enough.

While gathering around the table, Brudder-in-Law brings out the video camera and goes around asking what everyone is thankful for that past year. The answers can widely vary – but you get the idea. Some are sickly sweet, some goofy, some old and some new. One day, these will all be edited

together and the real craziness of the family will become clear.

This year, Klyde has an interesting set of things for which he is thankful – and here are a few. Not the ones that I am going to present at the table – but a list nonetheless.

Concerts and music in general. From the tried and true to the new and exciting. New music that arrived from House of Lords, Jon Anderson and Band of Geeks, the fresh release of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young from the Filmore East 1969, Tower of Power (yup, a Christmas album) – and so much more that it would take the entirety of our space.

Vinyl. New Vinyl. Old Vinyl (like the 4 12" Lou Reed singles we scored in NYC that came out of the Velvet Underground Museum when it closed). New Vinyl – a remixed version of Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Simon and Garfunkel - The Lost BBC Sessions and

more. There are so many more. Anywhere you go, be on the lookout for anything on Parachute Records – there are some funky rules in the UK and beyond about rights – especially if they are BBC recordings. Very cool.

Mind you – none as cool as Mrs. Peel's vinyl – but – well.

Friends – friends with us and friends not with us. This has been a year of many losses. Some losses we could see coming.....others sudden in a way that just makes you think. In the family that is RadioradioX and Xperience, it has been a mix of both and we cherish their memories and the times we had each and every day. Their voices in our heads that remind us to not sit around and wallow in sadness and despair.

Best late friend advice given me (mind you in my head after he'd passed) was that the ancestors aren't ready for me yet.....face mortality like a Lawn

Sausage song – disturbing, but not all that serious.

BTW – Brian, you'd have loved this years' Christmas card.

And DO NOT take the friends with you lightly. Your true friends will always be there, ready to defend you in the face of your own abject stupidity. You know, the ones where you'd not only assist in burying the body but would bring the chainsaw..... figuratively, of course.

Finally – as Klyde was putting this little holiday missive together, friend's mother, albeit elderly, passed suddenly. Ellen and Faith – dinner with you and friends was great, and one hopes not so long between again. CC and I and thankful for you guys – as always.

Happy Thanksgiving to each and every one of you all out there in magazine land.

Until next time.

Klyde



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