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# Jen Chura

## Empire Live

BY ROB SMITIX

Jen Chura. Photo provided.

**R**RX: I appreciate you doing this with me. Lots of people are going to read this. So no pressure.

(Both Laugh)

**RRX:** First of all, I am so happy that Empire Live/Underground is in Albany. It kind of morphed from being Northern Lights to Upstate Concert Hall (Clifton Park), but then came into Albany a few years back. For me, the move was ideal. It's a great spot for live music. So thank you for being a part of it.

**JC:** Absolutely.

**RRX:** What is your exact title there?

**JC:** Operations Management, I guess. I do a lot of different things. I have about 20 different hats I wear, so it's very hard to nail it all down, but that probably sums it up.

**RRX:** Well, I mean ... it was even hard getting you on the phone today because you have a show going on tonight. It's a lot of work, I don't think people realize what putting on these

events actually entails.

**JC:** Yeah, we're close to a sell-out tonight, so pressure's on.

**RRX:** That's awesome, but yeah, it is a lot of pressure. People simply open up the Xperience Monthly, or they go to your website ([EmpireLiveAlbany.com](http://EmpireLiveAlbany.com)) to find out who's coming to town, never putting any thought into what it takes behind the scenes.

**JC:** Every show is different, but it all kind of stays the same when it comes to the booking side of things. Obviously, the show gets booked after negotiating all of the numbers. From there, it goes right to ticketing and advertising, then into show day and full-blown production.

**RRX:** Yeah, I ran into you at one of the Upstate Punk Rock Flea Markets at Empire Live, which was on a Sunday. So I know, you even come in on the weekends to make it all happen.

**JC:** Yeah, there's no off-time typically for myself or David (Siewert); the two of us operate this place. Obviously,

we couldn't do it without our staff. We have a few people that are ... I guess, department heads, but the staff is what really keeps it all together. While David and I are the ones who run the venue, they are the reason we're here.

**RRX:** Of course. I think back to when ESPN commentator Rebecca Lobo said, "Good luck finding something to do in Albany," because that is so far from the truth. And Empire Live is at the center of it all! On any given night, you'll see the massive lines outside waiting to get into Empire Live, while simultaneously, you'll have an awesome show going on downstairs at Empire Underground. It's a scene, and it feels like it.

**JC:** That's great to hear. Again, we couldn't do it without our staff. It takes a village, you know? We are very lucky to have some really wonderful pillars that actually keep us held up.

**RRX:** I can't even keep up with the

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### Features



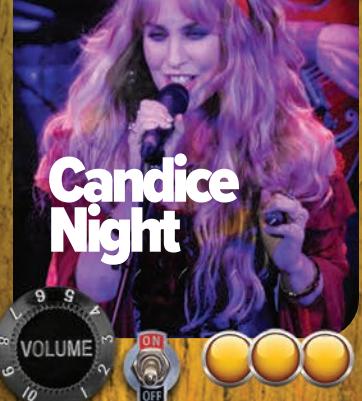
Jen Chura





Kate Taylor





Candice Night





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number of shows that you guys have going on there.

**JC:** Me either (Laughs).

**RRX:** No, it's crazy, but when I see some of the acts that are coming through, I'm like ... wow, what a great get! I mean ... the shows have always been good there, but it seems like in the last few years, the game has been stepped up quite a bit, and maybe that's an ode to you?

**JC:** Not really, not to me. I'm pretty low-key. There are a few of us who deal with booking and bringing the acts to the area. We all know Mike Valente brings shows to the area, but our other two partners are pretty well known in our industry; credit really goes to them, too, for the booking.

**RRX:** And you've got something for everyone, all the time. If someone's not really into what's happening today, something's happening tomor-

row that they will probably be into.

**JC:** Right, and that honestly was our goal even when we were located in Clifton Park. We really wanted to expand, and we were supposed to be in Albany in 2020 ... but obviously, with COVID, shutting down and everything, that didn't happen. David and I worked with people to get this place together for when we could be open. We had our first show upstairs in August of 2021. Our first show in the Underground was in November of 2021. And ever since then, we've been working to tweak things and make them better because ... nothing is ever completed. There's always a project.

**RRX:** Always is. You mentioned the pandemic, and I kid you not ... Empire Live was the reason I got the vaccine. I wasn't really feeling it, I didn't know who to trust, but I knew I wanted to go to concerts.

**JC:** (Chuckles)

**RRX:** Well, awesome. Any last

thoughts for our readers?

**JC:** Come on out to shows. See bands you like, see bands you don't even know you like, and enjoy yourself. We just want people to come, have a good time, and feel comfortable and happy. That's our goal. The best part about this job is when you have multiple shows per week and seeing the crowds change. But one thing that always stays the same is the fans watching their favorite bands

and seeing their faces when they hit the stage. It's a really cool feeling to know my staff and I made that happen for these people. Just like right now, the production is pretty heavy today, but our staff is killing it, and it's gonna look phenomenal.

**RRX:** Well, I know you're busy and you've got stuff to do, so I'm gonna let you go ahead and get to it, but I appreciate your time, Jen. Thank you.

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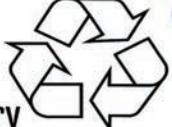
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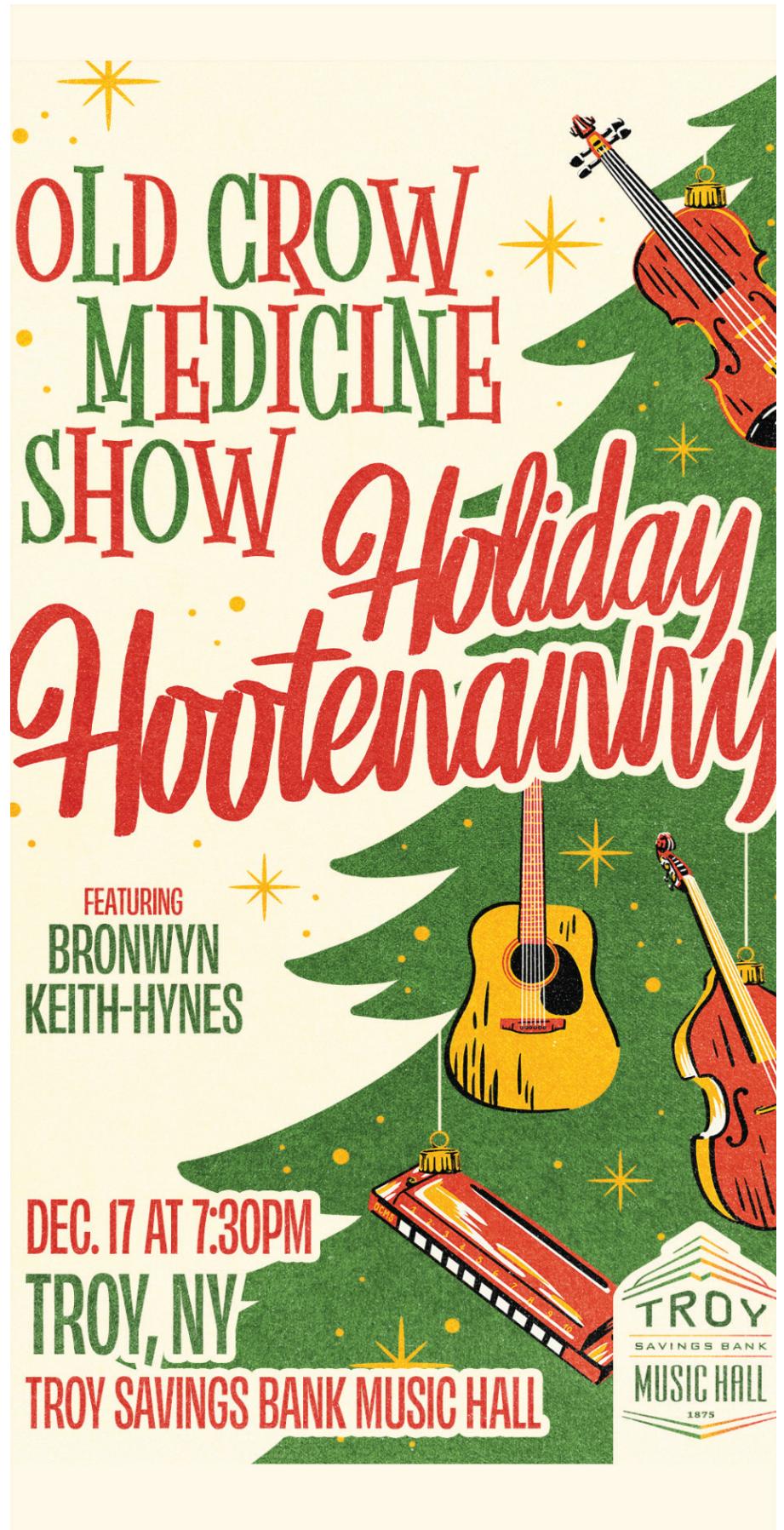
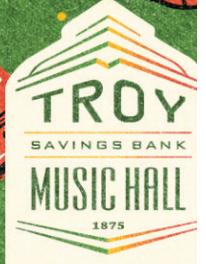
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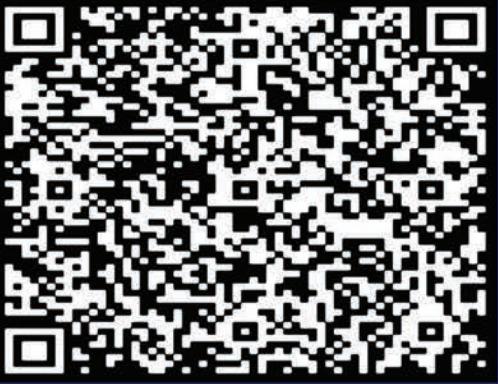
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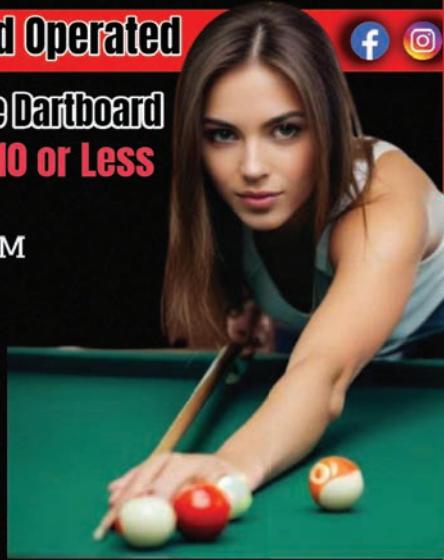
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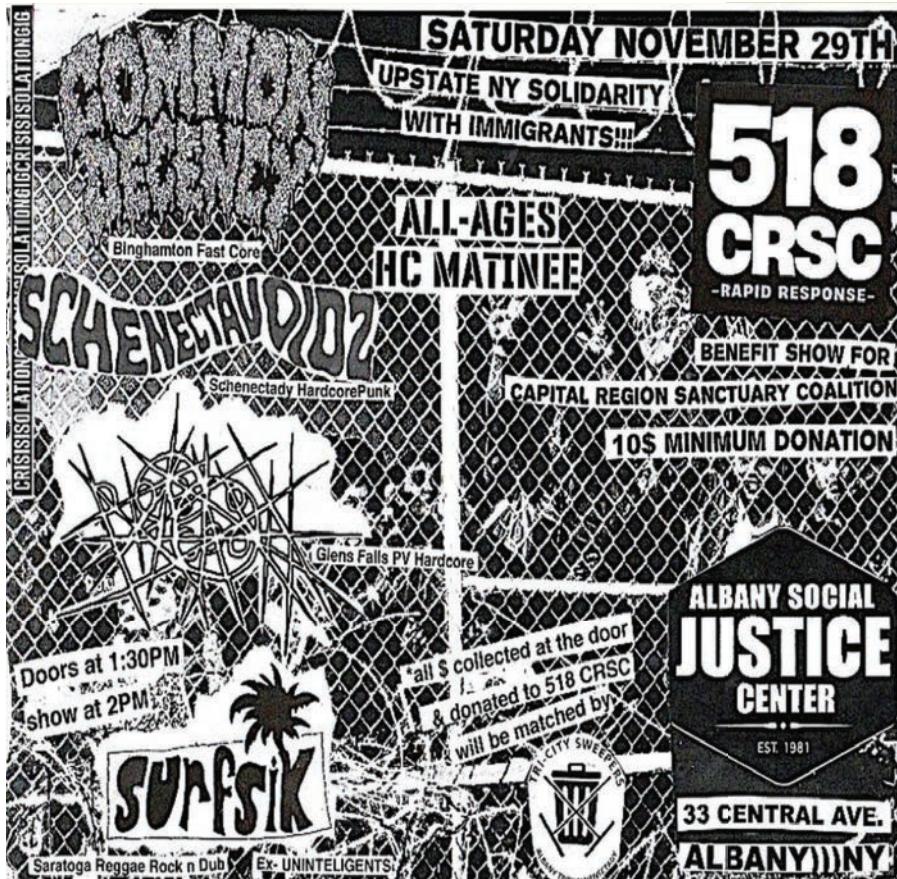
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BY OP CALLAGHAN

When I was 9 years old (and still had time to dream), I mailed a letter to the Ludwig drum company. In my letter, I explained to them that I was an aspiring young drummer who was interested in playing Ludwig drums. I painstakingly edited this letter multiple times, making corrections, revisions, and even including an illustration of myself playing Ludwig drums. I mailed my masterpiece out and waited. After what seemed like an eternity, I finally received a large envelope from Ludwig. Inside was a letter, thanking me for my interest, and some sheet music with basic rudiments. Last but not least was the Official Ludwig Drum Catalog for 1978. This complete listing of all the Ludwig Drums, configurations, colors, finishes, and artist profiles captured my imagination like no other publication. I read through every page, multiple times. Ludwig Big Beat, Pro Beat, Octoplus, Quadraplus, Rock Beat ... sweet fancy Moses. I fell asleep

multiple nights reading that catalog. Now, this was the '70s; an era of the Bee Gees, conversion vans, Grease, and the last Who performance with Keith Moon. For Ludwig Drums, it was the introduction of the "Tequila Sunrise" drum set, an acrylic kit in yellow, orange, and red. This drumset graced the cover of the catalog and was simply mind-blowing. Never before had any manufacturer of fine percussion instruments (or s\*\*t to hit) presented something so original, so dazzling, or beautiful as the Tequila Sunrise kit. This month, I would like to introduce a drummer who not only has great chops, great time, is a truly wonderful guy, but who was also literally raised under a Tequila Sunrise. Please welcome to Capital Region Time Keepers, the incredible (and newly married!) Mr. Brian Zink!

**RRX:** How did you get your start behind the kit?

**BZ:** I've been playing my entire life. I had a drum set in my bedroom from

basically day one. It was a beautiful Ludwig Tequila Sunrise Vistalite kit that belonged to my dad. I just kind of gravitated towards it and eventually started to try and play along to KISS records, gradually started jamming and chipping away at it until I could badly play along to those songs. Eventually, I moved on to more complicated records, drummers, and concepts, and have stuck with it ever since.

**RRX:** Are you formally trained, or did you take lessons?

**BZ:** I had initially started self-taught, by playing along to all sorts of records. However, I lucked out that I had a great music program at my school, and the drum instructor was another fine local time keeper, Andy Hearn, and he was my first real drum instructor. That's where my formal training started and where my journey with lessons began. He really did a great job teaching me the fundamentals and starting me out without any bad habits. There is still so much

practical advice he'd given me that I use today. I studied with him from 5th grade all the way up through 12th grade.

However, I really took an interest in taking lessons with as many people as I could, realizing pretty early on that I could gain a lot of different insight and advice from studying with different drummers. I'd gone down to the Drummers Collective when I was 15 and met a ton of great teachers there that I studied privately with for many years after that.

Then, when I was about 13, I unknowingly met a teacher (and friend) who would change the direction of my playing and career. I just so happened to walk into Drome Sound (R.I.P.) and saw a poster on the wall to take private lessons with Jason Bittner. I'd just seen him on the cover of Modern Drummer and figured he was coming through the area doing some private lessons for a day or two on a clinic tour or something. Fortunately for me, that wasn't the case. He lived locally, and so began the now



Brian Zink.

22-year relationship we've had. I was a drum student first, then a serious drum student, then subbed for him in a project or two while he'd be on tour, then his drum tech, and now a peer. Happy to report that he and Tony Tirino (both featured in this article previously) are the best men at my wedding, so I'd say I'm in good hands!

**RRX:** Who were some of your influences as a young drummer?

**BZ:** My biggest drum influence, then as well as now, is the professor, Neil Peart. I can't think of another drummer who has had a more significant impact on my playing and musical ideology from an early age onward. That said, I think there is a lot of merit to the notion that a player's sound is ultimately the combined sum of all their influences, so even early on, I tried to be open to a lot of different music and the drummers who were playing on it. Peter Criss, Art Blakey, Steve Smith, Dave Weckl, Jason Bittner, Stewart Copeland, Steve Gadd, Terry Bozzio, Danny Carey, Buddy Rich, Carter Beauford, and the list goes on and on. I lucked out that I had a subscription to Modern Drummer for the last few years it was an actual physical magazine (pre-digital publication), and it was an absolute treasure trove of knowledge and introduced me to a ton of drummers and music I probably wouldn't have discovered on my own.

**RRX:** Do you come from a musical family?

**BZ:** Not per se. No one besides myself in my immediate family plays an instrument. My dad can play drums, but I didn't really mine the aptitude as much as he would have or would have liked to, I think. However, one of the greatest things about my family while I was growing up was their introduction to so much good music, and furthermore, bringing me to shows. They took me to my first show when I was 4 years old (Rush at the Knickerbocker Arena on the Counterparts tour in 1994, not surprisingly) and really did a great job bringing

me to anything and everything worthwhile that would come through the area after that, especially if there was a great drummer involved. For example, I may have convinced my dad to sneak behind the stage with me at a James Taylor show to try and meet Steve Gadd. Believe it or not, that proved to be a successful venture! I have the pair of sticks he gave me as proof that this actually happened. So, while they aren't musicians in that sense, they certainly had an impact on me musically and the direction I eventually headed in.

**RRX:** Tell me about your first drum kit.

**BZ:** My first kit was a five-piece Tequila Sunrise Ludwig Vistalite kit. All classic big seventies sizes; 24" Kick, 18" Floor, 13" and 14" racks with the matching snare. Happy to say I still have it. It survived a house fire in 2014 and doesn't look too bad considering, thanks to Chris Toma. Thank you, Chris! I'll hang onto it forever at this point. Such a cool kit, still functional, and she's been there for the whole ride! Plus, if you're not playing Bonham triplets on a Ludwig Vistalite, are you even really playing Bonham triplets?

**RRX:** You are not! What are you playing now?

**BZ:** I've been a Pearl drums and Zildjian cymbals guy for years. My main rig for The Accents is a Pearl Session Studio kit (Birch/Mahogany shells) in this beautiful black sparkle finish. One up, one down. Basic four-piece setup. 10" tom, 14" floor, and a 20" kick. I use different snares for different rooms and gigs, depending on what will work best. The main one I have been using of late is a Pearl Music City Custom snare made by Pearl's master craftsman, Ron DePew. It's a 6.5x14 Solid Maple with a center inlay of figured maple between two Macassar ebony inlays. It's a beautiful instrument and sounds unreal! The cymbals also change depending on the gig, but always Zildjian. I also use Remo

*Continued on Page 50...*



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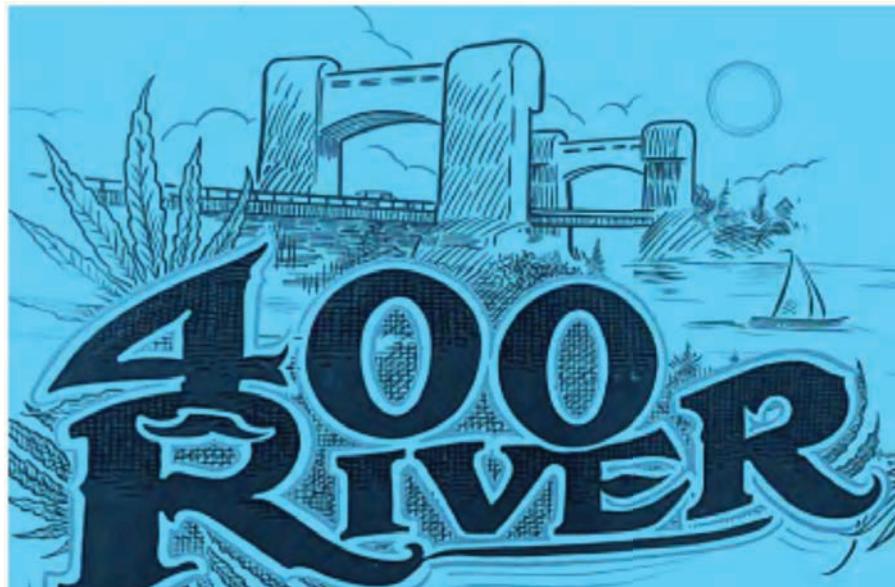


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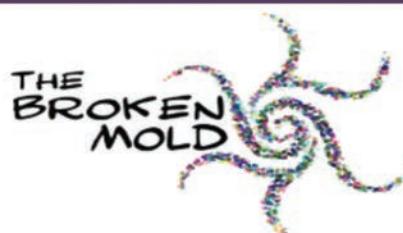




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# Music Notes

BY PEAK MUSIC STUDIOS

## Music Notes: The Art, Science, and Technique of Music

"Why does my mix sound like a wet blanket even when everything's plugged in right?" It's a question every musician, sound tech, and weekend rocker has asked at some point. You've got the gear, the grit, and the groove, but somehow, it still sounds like everyone's playing from inside a cardboard box.

Welcome to the mysterious world of EQ, where four little knobs hold the power to make your band sound like a show or a train wreck. Most midrange mixers give you four EQ controls per channel: Low, Low-Mid, High-Mid, and High. They look innocent enough, but twist them wrong and you'll unleash the sonic equivalent of a chili cook-off gone wrong.

Let's decode them.

### The Low Knob: The Mud Monster

This one usually lives around 80–120 Hz—the land of bass guitars, kick drums, and other things that rattle windows. Too much low-end, and everything turns to soup. Too little, and your mix feels weak.

**Vocals:** Roll it off a bit. Nobody came to hear your lungs.

**Guitar:** Cut it. Guitars don't belong in the sub-basement.

**Bass:** Boost slightly for warmth and weight.

**Backing track with drums:** Keep it flat or add a touch if the kick's shy.

If your sound system is fighting the room (hello, boomy bar stages), cut lows everywhere except the bass. Instantly, clarity returns, and you'll look like you actually meant to do that.

### The Low-Mid Knob: The Muddle Zone

Ah, 250–500 Hz, the no-person's land where everything fights for attention. This is the "why does it sound like there's a blanket over the speakers?" frequency range.

**Vocals:** Cut gently to clear up boxiness.

**Guitar:** Flat or a small trim if it feels cloudy.

**Bass:** A tiny boost here gives punch, but too much makes mud.

**Backing track:** Small cut; let the live instruments breathe.

Most new engineers boost here because it sounds "full." But fullness is often just ... muddiness wearing nice shoes.

### The High-Mid Knob: The Truth Teller

Now we're in the 2–4 kHz range, the land of clarity and presence, the part of the mix that says, "Hey, listen to me!" It's also where mistakes shout the loudest.

**Vocals:** Boost a little to bring words forward.

**Guitar:** Small boost for bite and pick definition.

**Bass:** Add a touch if you want it to "speak."

**Backing track:** Gentle lift for snare snap and energy.

Go easy. Too much, and you'll have that vintage "AM radio at full blast" vibe. Your audience will start looking for earplugs instead of encore buttons.

### The High Knob: The Fairy Dust

This one sparkles around 8–12 kHz, the realm of air, shimmer, and the magic that makes things sound expensive. Use it wisely.

**Vocals:** Light lift for openness.

**Guitar:** Slight boost if it's dull; leave it flat if it's already bright.

**Bass:** Leave it alone. Bass doesn't need glitter.

**Backing track:** Boost for cymbals, reverb tails, and that studio-polished feel.

Remember: "more treble" is rarely the fix for a dull mix. It's usually "less mud." The Fairy Dust can't fix a swamp.

### Panning and Perspective

Keep your vocals and bass center

because that's the spine of your sound. Guitars can go left and right; that's your width. Drums and backing tracks? Spread them naturally across the stereo field, leaving your voice front and center. Think of your mix like a photograph: vocals in focus, instruments framing the picture, and effects adding depth.

If everything's up the middle, your mix will sound like a traffic jam. Spread it out, and suddenly your audience can hear every part.

### The Science and the Soul

EQ is part art, part science. A small twist of a knob changes how frequencies interact. Cutting 3 dB at 300 Hz can be the difference between clarity and chaos. Our brains love separation; neuroscientist Daniel Levitin reminds us that music isn't just sound, it's organized sound. EQ is how we organize that sonic space.

And like any art, it takes practice. You'll make mistakes. You'll over-boost something and wonder why it sounds like angry bees. Then one day, you'll twist the right knob at the right time, and the mix will bloom. That's the moment you know you're not guessing anymore, you're sculpting.

### The Bottom Line

Four knobs. Infinite possibilities. The Low keeps your feet on the ground, the Low-Mid clears the fog, the High-Mid brings the truth, and the High adds the magic.

So next time your mix sounds off, don't panic. Just remember: every cut you make gives another instrument space to shine. EQ isn't about volume. It's about balance. And if you mess it up? Twist it back and call it "creative exploration." We've all done it. See you in the studio.

### This Month in Music History

November 1, 1969: Elvis Presley's "Suspicious Minds" hit No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100.

November 5, 1956: Nat King Cole became the first African-American performer to host a national TV variety show.

November 8, 1971: Led Zeppelin released Led Zeppelin IV, featuring "Stairway to Heaven."

November 18, 1993: Nirvana recorded their iconic "MTV Unplugged in New York" performance.

November 22, 1963: The Beatles released "With the Beatles" in the U.K., which was the same day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

November 24, 1991: Freddie Mercury, lead singer of Queen, died of complications from AIDS, just one day after publicly revealing his diagnosis.

November 25, 1976: The Band held their farewell concert, The Last Waltz, featuring Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Eric Clapton.

November 28, 1992: Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You" began its 14-week run at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100.

November 29, 2001: George Harrison died at age 58.

November 30, 1982: Michael Jackson released "Thriller," which became the best-selling album of all time.

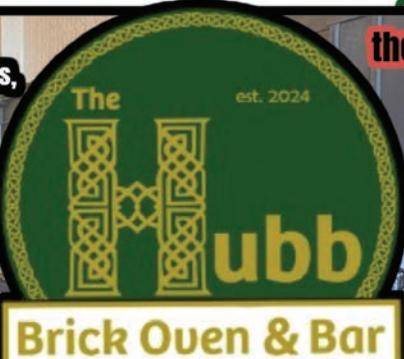
### Weird But True

"Jingle Bells" wasn't originally a Christmas song. It was written for Thanksgiving.

The song was composed by James Lord Pierpont in 1857. It was titled "One Horse Open Sleigh" for a Sunday school performance on Thanksgiving. Over time, it became a Christmas song thanks to its snowy imagery and catchy hook.

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# RUTHIE FOSTER

**W**hen you win a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Blues Album, you get a little bit of bragging rights. But when you've grown up in gospel, you might just leave the bragging behind. Ruthie Foster is easy to talk to, and on October 23rd at Caffe Lena, she'll be easy to listen to.

**RRX:** I read that you grew up with a lot of cousins - is that true?

**RF:** That is true.

**RRX:** You grew up with a lot of cousins, and you also grew up with gospel, the gospel tradition. But outside of church, did you and your cousins ever put on performances, anything fun like that?

**RF:** Not really. Having that many relatives, most of us were in the same area, but not all. That was just when we were all together. But I think I may have been the only one who was actually touring as a kid and actually getting a chance to play in different communities, different churches.

**RRX:** Do you mean touring through the church? Was that how it was when you were growing up?

**RF:** Just touring independently. My mother was basically my first manager, I guess you could call it.

**RRX:** When did you start touring? How old were you?

**RF:** I had to be in my early teens. So maybe 12. That was pretty small. I started playing at different churches.

**RRX:** Was it like regionally, or did you go across the country?

**RF:** Yeah, it was definitely regional. Uh-huh.

**RRX:** When you first started, you kind of shied away from performing out in front of people. You were doing a lot of, like, writing songs and playing for other people. Was it shyness that

kept you from the spotlight, or was it something else? Have you ever thought about that, making that decision to start doing it for yourself?

**RF:** I was really just being shy. I was a quiet kid. Music was my way out of my shyness. That had a lot to do with why I only played for my family, for myself. Later on, I got used to it. You get used to being in front of people. Yeah, I just kinda took to it.

**RRX:** I know that I've sometimes cocooned myself and not really been around the music scene for a while. Have you had anything like that where you just kind of cocooned and went away from the spotlight for a little while, maybe just catch your bearings or whatever?

**RF:** Yeah, definitely. I have taken breaks from music along the way, too. I took some time off from music when I joined the military. I didn't really let too many people know that I actually sang and played. I just wanted to do something different. And I took another break later on. After I left New York, I took a break to help take care of my mom. And worked in a TV station for a while, worked in broadcasting.

**RRX:** I can imagine if I were working in TV broadcasting, if I had that knowledge, and then I was also a musician, having that knowledge and experience, I would want to put music and television together in all kinds of ways. Have you ever thought about video beyond just a video of you playing? Have you ever looked at trying to cross those two spheres of your life?

**RF:** I guess I have entertained that thought before. But I also know it's a lot of work. It's enough work just being a performing artist. But yeah, I've thought a lot about that. They are very different. This is just something I

**BY LIAM SWEENEY**



Ruthie Foster.

never really felt I could sink my teeth into (putting them together), but you know, there's still time, maybe.

**RRX:** So you've been a deep songwriter. You're very ensconced in the community of songwriters. This is a community that nobody knows about. Everybody knows about the people who are front of the stage, singing. Like a lot of pop stars, they're singing songs that someone else wrote, and nobody knows who that is. It's kind of like this world that nobody really knows about. Are there a couple of people that you think are the Jimi Hendrixes of songwriters that you've come across, the ones that people should know about?

**RF:** I do come across people who folks should know about. One of them is Kyshona Armstrong. She lives in Nashville. She's a beautiful songwriter, and she tours all over. She tours in Europe quite frequently. I think she's from North Carolina or something like that. She's one. There are tons of people I run into, especially some of the openers, people who actually open for me once in a while. I run into people that I feel should be heard, I just can't think of any names off the top of my head. But Kyshona can survive.

**RRX:** You won a Grammy for Best Contemporary Blues Album, and you were nominated five times before that happened. This is also the first Gram-

my for Sun Records, right?

**RF:** It is, yeah, first Grammy.

**RRX:** So you're winning this personal accomplishment, but it's also an accomplishment in music history. Did you and Sun Records have any kind of party or celebration? Did you celebrate this together in any way?

**RF:** Not really. I run into these guys once in a while when I'm in Nashville. There's another award they won shortly after that. We haven't really ... we celebrated a little bit together when I was in Nashville for the Americana Festival.

**RRX:** What did it feel like? Because you were nominated five times. Five times you're thinking, "Oh my God, I'm going to get it," and then you didn't, but now you got it. What did that feel like when you're like, "Wait a minute, OMG"?

**RF:** It was definitely unexpected, especially with so many incredible names in that category and people who

I call my friends, like Shamekia [Copeland]. She and I are very good friends, and she was nominated in that category. Joe Bonamassa, we actually travel on his cruise. We have a cruise with him coming up in March of next year. And Steve Cropper. I've opened for Steve on several occasions. So just to have my name in, I'll say - pretty good company. It was enough for me.

**RRX:** Has everybody been very supportive, even the people that are competing against each other, seeing as how you guys all play together? Like you're all together anyways.

**RF:** Yeah, we see each other at least once a year somewhere.

**RRX:** Do you guys ever joke about winning Grammys? Maybe just a friendly, joking kind of competition?

**RF:** Sometimes, especially with Shamekia. She and I go, "Well, OK, if I don't get it, you better get it."

**RRX:** I listened to you sing Rosetta Tharpe at the 2022 Crescent City Blues

and Barbecue. I saw that video. It was just amazing. I was blown away. So a lot of blues is, like, bringing up the music and the lyrics of people from long past. And we put that into our music, into our words. When you're going to sing Rosetta Tharpe, do you have to prepare to sing her, or is it just natural to you at this point?

**RF:** Oh, that's just natural. I do my best to put my own voice to the song, but I love singing her songs. I grew up singing her songs, so, yeah.

**RRX:** What is in your future, like your near future?

**RF:** In the future, rest. This has been a big year, for obvious reasons. But we're about to wrap up a lot of touring in a few weeks, and I'll have a couple of Texas shows coming up next month. But after that, I'm gonna take some time down off the road, and I'm actually going back up to Nashville to ... write for another album, another project.

**RRX:** Any sneak peek about that project, or are you gonna keep it under your hat?

**RF:** I'm keeping that in my hat for now.

**RRX:** You're coming to Caffe Lena (in Saratoga) pretty soon.

**RF:** Yes, I am.

**RRX:** Have you been here before?

**RF:** I have. I've been there before and I remember having a great time. It's a small room. And I think that's what I really like about it. It's very intimate, and folks are there to listen ... I remember everyone being really quiet, but it turns out that was just listening to the music. I appreciate that.

**RRX:** Very passionate music listeners over at Lena. Is there anything you'd love to tell people here before you come up?

**RF:** I usually try to remind people to just try to come out and prepare yourself for a hallelujah time.

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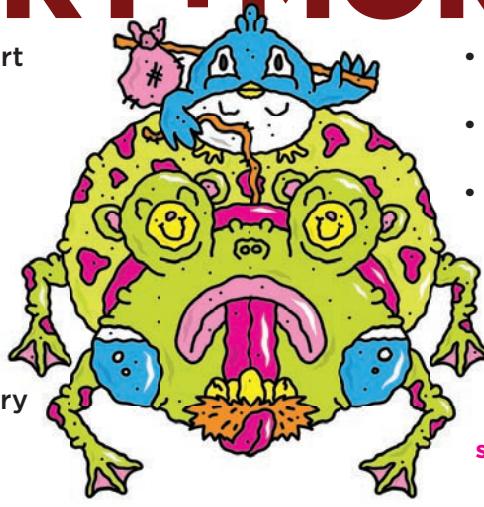
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# Rat Tours NYC Suzanne Reisman

BY LIAM SWEENEY

**R**RX: You hold garbage and rat tours in New York City. What got you started in this endeavor?

**SR:** I'd been working in nonprofit social services administration for a long time – over two decades – and, given the horrendous political environment, I decided to do something that brought more joy to my life. I love walking tours, and I've had my NYC tour guide license since 2009 or 2010. It seemed like a good time to put it to use talking about things I care about, but in an entertaining way.

**RRX:** Have you ever been attacked by a rat?

**SR:** LMAO! NO! Rats are far more scared of us than we are of them.

Although I was looking in a trash can last night during a tour, when one jumped out. It scared the s\*&t out of me! I screamed so loud, I also seemed to scare the shit out of it and its friends, because that rat and a few others bolted away.

**RRX:** Have the police or the city ever tried to dissuade you from showing people this side of New York?

**SR:** Actually, the City has been really supportive. There are a few initiatives underway to teach the community about rats and rat mitigation. I used their free trainings to develop material for my tour. I also encourage NYC residents to sign up for the trainings to learn more! It's important that we understand why we have a rat problem,

and it's not the rats – it's us. If people would change their behavior around trash – and this is true from Dutch times on – then we'd have many fewer rats.

**RRX:** What area would non-New Yorkers be surprised has a lot of rats? What area would native New Yorkers be surprised has a lot of rats?

**SR:** It seems both New Yorkers and visitors are surprised by how much rats really love living in parks. They don't want to be in our buildings – they love burrowing into green areas!

**RRX:** What is the craziest thing you've come across in tours, rat-related or non-rat-related?

**SR:** Twice, the same very inebriated older woman has stopped the tour

while we are in DeLury Square to tell us how she went into Ryders Alley at night in the 1990s to talk to some guys who had baseball bats and bags to find out what they were doing. They were beating rats to feed to their pet snakes.

**RRX:** Has anyone wanted to feed the rats on the tour, or do something weird like that?

**SR:** People joke about petting the rats, but no one has. Also, no one – thank god – has tried to feed them. I'm very serious that people understand that having so many rats and garbage around is bad. Once, a rat jumped out of a trash can and landed on one of my guests' feet. He was pretty excited by that, which ... OK. I admit that I screamed. LMAO.

# Finding Balance

## My Personal Cannabis Journey

BY RI TOKES

**H**ey everyone — today I want to take you on a journey through my own personal consumption.

I have found, running these streets for as many years as I have, that the way I utilize this plant is often very different than the average consumer, and I want to talk about that a little bit today.

Many of you will argue that cannabis is an intoxicant, and I would argue that it's a medicine. I'd even go so far as to argue that this plant was put here specifically for us to help us find balance.

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So, I use this plant to balance my body.

When I'm having a conversation with a budtender, or even with myself, about what I'm going to consume in that very moment, it comes down to a few factors:

- How do I feel right now?
- How do I want to feel?
- And what do I have to do today?

If I can answer these three critical questions, I can pick a strain that makes the most sense for my day, my afternoon, or my evening, what have you.

### Morning Medicine

In the mornings, when I'm feeling a bit sluggish, many people would turn to a sativa, and there's nothing wrong with that. You're on the right path.

But I want to take it a little bit deeper. What are the scents and flavor notes that are present in that strain?

Because those are the terpenes we're talking about. Those components, as well as a few others such as flavonoids, are going to give me a more holistic view of the feeling that strain will give me.

Maybe that strain is high in limonene and pinene. I can anticipate that that strain will likely be very uplifting and potentially relieve some anxiety if I'm feeling any. The magic of aromatherapy in terpenes!

### The Magic of Context

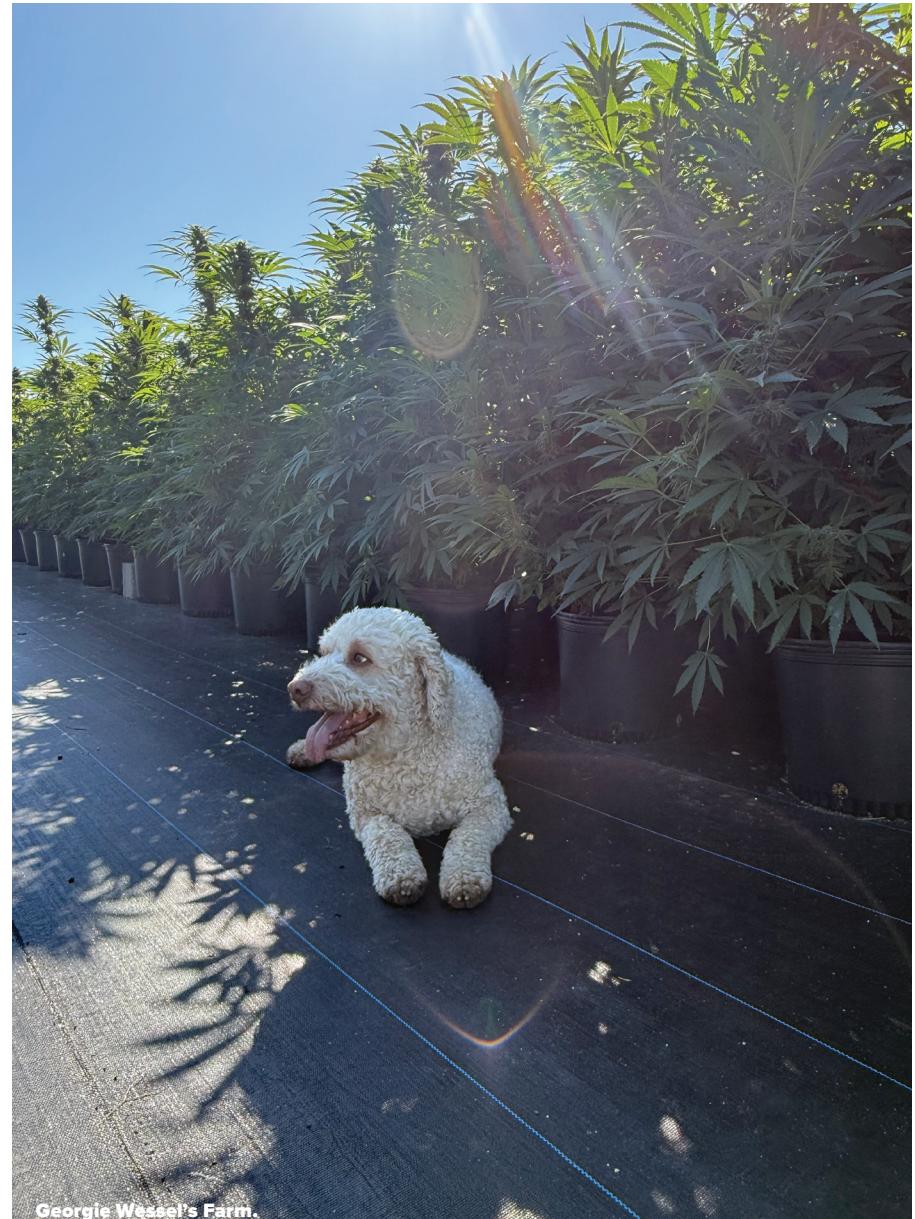
Looking at myself with all of the context that is around me and looking at the plant and all of the context within it, that's where the magic happens.

So, my question to you is: Are you taking a deeper look at this plant when you're consuming?

Are you asking yourself critical, self-reflection questions to be able to direct yourself within your high?

### A Deeper Relationship

I'm not saying there's any right or wrong way to consume this plant, but I



Georgie Wessel's Farm.

am saying you could have a much deeper relationship with it.

You could legitimately use it to

balance your body, mind, and spirit — and actually change the context of your day.



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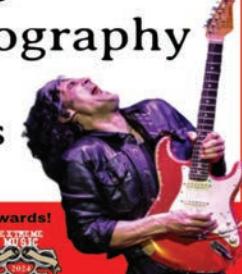
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# Kate Taylor Sister Kate

BY LIAM SWEENEY

**J**ames Taylor has seen fire, and he's seen rain. But he probably first saw both of them with his sister, Kate. And I have a story. I was going to interview Kate Taylor on a Tuesday, and the prior Saturday, I was emptying our storage unit. I was throwing away beat-up, scratched records, and I was about to toss a stack in the dumpster when I happened to look before launch, and it was "Sister Kate," Kate's debut album. Freaky, right? Well, I went home, and the phone rang. It was Kate. I thought it was Tuesday; she thought it was Saturday. I'm sure she was right. I'm also sure that you all were meant to read this. She will be at Caffe Lena in Saratoga on November 1.

**RRX:** I want to talk about "Sister

Kate." We have to, because I listened to it and I was blown away. And you just have a great story personally, going back up until now. And you have something new coming up. "Why Wait!" So tell us about Kate, and how "Sister Kate" and "Why Wait" came to be?

**KT:** Yes.

**RRX:** So let's talk about that, 'cause I just listened to a little bit of it and it sounds very, very tasty.

**KT:** I had met Peter Asher with James in London back in '69. I had gone over there to make sure that the Beatles were taking good care of James, because that was very important for this 18-year-old person to be able to do this. So I went over, and he had been recording with Peter on the Apple label, and yes, they were

taking good care of him. But in the meantime, I got to meet Peter, and we went to his sort of summer cottage.

It was in June, and we went up to the country place out there somewhere and had tea, and there were a lot of his friends there. And James and I climbed down into this ancient stone-lined, empty swimming pool that was in the backyard. And we sang some of the songs that we sang together in earlier years. And they're like, "You know, it sounded great." I mean, to me, it was so much fun. Well, of course, singing with James is the ultimate.

A little while later, I came back home. I just moved to Martha's Vineyard from - I didn't even know where I was living before - Cambridge, I guess. At one point, the phone rang, and it was Peter Asher telling me that he was moving to Los Angeles, and did I want to make a record? And I said, by all means. Well, I actually said, "Let me think about it." Yes.

So I flew out to LA and we started to make this record. He had just finished working on James's record, was it "Sweet Baby James," maybe? It was his first record that he made with Peter in Los Angeles. Peter had been the head of A&R on the Beatles label. And James knocked on the drum, and that's a whole story in itself. But Peter was now managing him and producing him. And so he set up the same situation with me.

**RRX:** So that must have been an amazing time.

**KT:** We were making "Sister Kate," and it was a great time to be in Los Angeles. There were all these people on the cusp of these incredible careers. And of course, nobody could really anticipate what was going to happen with all these, but Jackson Browne and the Eagles, and Linda Ronstadt and Joni Mitchell and

James, Carole King, you know. It was a wonderful time to be there because everything was fresh and everybody was excited, and it was kind of the beginning of this whole new phase of music in America, and there I was.

**RRX:** So what happened after that? Did you just keep hitting the road and the studio?

**KT:** I did a tour, and then I came home, and I realized that I really needed a little time to recharge and collect myself. I went home, I went into a friend's teepee, and I said, I've got to have one. But I realize now that I needed grounding. I bought some canvas. I got a pattern. I sewed, hand-sewed a teepee, went up to Maine, and got the poles. Set the thing up. It was like six years later that James came into my teepee yard and said that he was changing record labels, and that they'd given him the opportunity to record someone ... and he asked me if I wanted to make a record. I said, by all means, and we got working on that

**RRX:** Now, there's a story about Linda Ronstadt, isn't there?

**KT:** When I was in LA, Jackson Browne had approached Peter about producing him and being his manager. Peter thought about it, and he thought about James, and that perhaps it was just too close to have these two singer-songwriters on the same sort of roster, you know? Who gets what band and what ... just so "two cooks." He turned Jackson down, and then he told me that Linda Ronstadt had also asked him if he would be her manager and producer. He and I talked about it and agreed that it would also be cutting it close to the bone - Linda and I, you know, who gets what song? It was just a little bit too close.

So he turned Linda down. And then I



Kate Taylor. Photo provided..

came home and I realized that I was like a little gal with a finger in the socket. I was so excitable, and I realized that I needed some grounding. So the teepee was perfect. I didn't know this at the time, but looking back on it, I can see that teepee was just the right medicine for me at that time.

I called Linda, or I saw her, maybe at a show. And I said, "Well, look, I'm not going to be doing any touring, and I'm not recording right now. So why don't you call Peter and let him know that he can, that I say it's all right if he manages and produces you." And so she did ... and they had this amazing string of incredible recordings, and it was really perfect. I feel like the fairy godmother.

I would be at home, and I met my husband, and we had our first child, and I was doing another thing. But I used to sit and watch the Grammys, and I'd see Peter win another one for best producer or something. And I said, "Now, someday I would like to work with Peter again." He

continued to work with James for about twenty years, so Peter was very close to the family. I would see him occasionally at a show, or he would come to some family events and things. So I knew him, I was in touch with him, but we were definitely in different sort of spheres.

**RRX:** So let's talk about "Why Wait!" Was was that road like?

**KT:** In 2007 or 2008, I started to kind of rekindle my performing. I had made a record, kind of recorded it at home, called "The Beautiful Road." I was getting back up and doing some performing, and I was going to be in the City, in New York, at the Metropolitan Room. I got in touch with Peter, and I said, "You know, are you gonna be in New York at this time because I've got a show and I'd love it if you would come." And lo and behold, he came. It was lovely to see him, and I sang it, I sang for him. I don't know whether this was psychosomatic or what, but I had the most horrific cases of laryngitis. I rarely get this, but here I was,

doing the sound check, and it was like my mouth would open and air would come out, but no sound. The waiters who were setting up the tables and things, they looked over like, "Oh no, poor girl." But there's something about the adrenaline that you have pumping through you when you're on stage ... so I was able to make some noise. I told the audience, I said, 'You're just going to have to imagine all the fabulous notes that I'm not hitting that I usually do.'

So, anyway, I made it through, and it sounded OK. Peter and I kind of rekindled our friendship, and I ended up using some of his band on my shows when I got to California. I opened for him a couple of times, and we had a nice situation, just sort of very familial. And then COVID hit, and everybody was off the road.

Peter and I were out in Los Angeles and his manager realized that 2021 was the 50th anniversary of "Sister Kate." This was 2020 or something, and we realized that an anniversary was coming

up, and we decided to make a record. So I flew to Los Angeles in a hazmat suit. We started the record, and it turned out that a lot of the fellows who had been on the "Sister Kate" record were also sidelined because of COVID. They had gone on to make these amazing careers touring with giants, but they were all off the road. So a lot of the original players on "Sister Kate" came and played on "Why Wait!"

So that was really fun. It was so satisfying for me and so gratifying. I was just happy to be with these people, hear them play, watch Peter do his thing. It was nice. So we put out "Why Wait!" And then we did a tour with Albert Lee, Peter and I, and a couple of other people. It had a wonderful drummer who had worked with Paul McCartney. We did a tour, Peter and I, we fell back into our friendship again, and it was nice. That was a nice kind of bookend for that particular phase of my life and my singing career, I guess you call it. Anyway, so there you are.

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# Candice Night

## *Blackmore's Night*

BY JASON IRWIN

For more than 25 years, Candice Night and Ritchie Blackmore (Rainbow, Deep Purple) have been enchanting audiences around the world with Blackmore's Night, blending Renaissance-inspired melodies with folk-rock magic. As the band embarks on their 2025 fall tour, including a stop at the Cohoes Music Hall on Sunday, November 23rd, I was able to chat with Candice to find out a little more.

**RRX:** Your live shows seem to welcome people to step back in time, with fans in costume and all. What's that atmosphere like from the stage?

**CN:** It's incredible. One of my favorite quotes (to paraphrase Shakespeare) is that the "mask is not to conceal but to reveal." For me, seeing people show the world a side of themselves they usually keep hidden — or step into a totally different role — is fascinating. We've seen full knights, monks, queens and kings, jesters, fairies, peasants, gypsies — you name it. It's like a costume party wherever we go. The great thing is watching

people make their costumes their own identity. It's such a beautiful way to express themselves. You don't need to dress up, but it makes the event feel that much more special. Often, those who do dress up find like-minded people, trade compliments on their garb, and make lifelong friends. It's quite a community we've built around these shows — and that positive energy is electric.

**RRX:** Ritchie stepped away from arena rock for this kind of music. What pulled you toward the Renaissance and folk style?

**CN:** He did. I never heard this type of music before I met him — in the early '90s, he was listening to Renaissance music all the time. When I moved in with him in 1991, he would play it around the house. Looking out at the falling snow and deer in our garden in our dark Tudor home while that music played felt like being inside a movie soundtrack — the perfect meeting of audio and visual. It became the perfect soundtrack for nature, and that escape from modern stress has

held a deep, special place in my heart ever since.

**RRX:** You play all kinds of medieval instruments — which one's your favorite?

**CN:** The pennywhistle or the gems-horn. I love the wind instruments that have a more airy, muted sound, compared to the ones I often play onstage that are loud and bombastic for the full band — like the shawms or rauschpfeifes. Each instrument is so individual and adds a different texture to our songs beyond the typical five-piece band sound.

**RRX:** If you could make it happen, what film or story do you think Blackmore's Night's music would be the perfect soundtrack for?

**CN:** I see so many period films and TV shows that would suit our music — anything from "The Tudors" to "Outlander," even witchy Halloween-vibe shows or movies like "Practical Magic 2." I guess we're not top of mind for music supervisors yet, but even gaming would work. Open to ideas!

**RRX:** You always support local animal shelters on tour — why is that cause so important to you, and what kind of response have you seen?

**CN:** Animals ask so little but give so much in return. The joy and unconditional love they give is immeasurable. The people who work in shelters — healing, helping, saving animals year-round — are angels on earth. Big celebs often pair with national organizations, but when we come to town, we try to bring funds, supplies, and awareness to the local shelters that work so hard and see so much pain. We donate at home year-round and, on the road, try to shine a spotlight where it's needed. The response is always heartfelt.

**RRX:** Your lyrics often celebrate nature and simple joys. Do you see your music as an escape from today's busy world?

**CN:** Absolutely. Music has always been my escape from stress and pressure. As a teenager who didn't fit in, I'd go home, put on vinyl or headphones, and

connect with songs — that got me through difficult times. I covered notebooks with lyrics, which led to poetry and then song lyrics. Nature is a great healer for me: sunsets, fireflies, shooting stars, feeling the wind, catching snowflakes, the colors of autumn — those small miracles renew mind and spirit.

**RRX:** If you could bring one modern convenience back to the Renaissance, what would it be — and would you use it on stage?

**CN:** If we changed conveniences in time, that might mess with the time-space continuum — we wouldn't be where we are now! But if I lived then, I'd love sanitary conditions, plumbing, and air conditioning. Yes — I'd definitely use air conditioning onstage!

**RRX:** What's something about Renaissance culture that's often misunderstood?

**CN:** It's funny — Ritchie is more of a Renaissance purist, and I'm more drawn to the fantasy and romantic imagery. That in itself is a misunderstanding: the romanticized version (ambient lighting, bonfires on hills, maidens waving from castle windows) isn't the full reality. The era has a very romantic visual in my mind, but people often conflate fantasy with historical reality.

**RRX:** If Blackmore's Night really lived in the Renaissance, what role would you play?

**CN:** I'd probably be a peasant swept off my feet by a wandering minstrel, singing and playing as we travel — much like my role today.

**RRX:** Despite your intent not to perform songs from Ritchie's Deep Purple or Rainbow days, have you ever had an audience member go off track and give a shout for "Smoke on the Water"?

**CN:** Of course — even my son did that when he was six! We were at the Paramount in Long Island; Ritchie spotted him in the balcony and asked, "OK, Rory, what do you want to hear?" He yelled, "Smoke on the Water," and the audience went crazy — so we obliged. Ritchie will

play those songs (he's done "Street of Dreams," "Stargazer," "Temple of the King," "Hush," "Man on the Silver Mountain," "Rainbow Eyes," "Child in Time," even a 16th-century "Greensleeves"), but only when he wants to. After decades of playing the same requests, he got tired of being obliged — now he has the freedom to play what he wants when he wants, and that creative freedom is wonderful.

**RRX:** What's it really like being in a band with your spouse for over 25 years?

**CN:** The hardest part is that I wear many hats — I write lyrics, sing, play woodwinds, and also handle fix-it tasks when things go wrong: travel, bandmates, stage sets, dinnertimes, wardrobe. That can be mentally taxing. But stepping on stage with your soulmate and performing music you created together for fans who truly share your path — those couple of hours can be pure magic.

**RRX:** When you're not playing medieval music, what's something surprising on your personal playlist?

**CN:** With both my children now teenagers, I hear a lot of newer radio music I wouldn't have otherwise. My playlist is varied — I'm a child of the '70s and a teen of the '80s, so I still rock out to hair bands and classic rock in the car — much to my kids' embarrassment!

**RRX:** After all these years, what do you hope new listeners take away from a Blackmore's Night concert?

**CN:** A couple of hours spent in our fantasy world. My favorite thing is watching generations come to the shows — children, parents, grandparents. Kids dress as princesses or Robin Hood, men are often die-hard Blackmore fans, women enjoy the softer female vocals, and grandparents appreciate melodic music — there's something for everyone. Our fan base defies genre and generation. Seeing people take the emotional journey the music offers, connect with us, and leave with that after-show glow of positive energy is a blessing every time.



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# Rob Skane

BY ROB SKANE

**C**arly Simon, you're so vain ... google it. I mean, no one buys records anymore, so why would you even know who she is? No offense, but she was, is, and will always be more popular than your band. Relax, already – it's not always about you. Trust me, sometimes we all feel like we've been tied to the whipping post. Tore up from the floor up, and tore down almost level to the ground. I get it. Your band can't get gigs, and it's a bummer. The thing is, no one owes you anything. Be undeniably good, and the gigs will appear. Easier said than done, as we all know. If you're not getting work, then maybe, as a band, you need to look within? There's no shame in trying to get better. The shame is in blaming everyone and everything else for your lack of development. I've been there, by the way.

If you're a band, you're a band. You all work together, it's part of it. You grow together by being supportive and encouraging to one another. And once you've reached that level of trust and respect for everyone in the combo, then a lot of good things can happen. Sometimes, though, there's an outlier. I have played music with some very toxic human beings, and I suffered through it because I really wanted to play. But it's never worth it.

Quite often, it's the least skilled who are the least dedicated. Yet they always seem to be the most entitled. I suppose it's just easier to carve people up behind their backs than it is to work on honing your craft. Although you could actually listen to music and dig deep into things. If you play guitar, listen to all the stuff that you enjoy, and when you're feeling like it, focus on what the guitar player(s) is/are doing. But really focus – critical

listening, as they say in the biz. Not listening to criticize, listening to learn. It's always fun to understand things like how one guitar might follow the vocal or how the timbre of a note can change depending on where it's played on the neck of your guitar. In the old days, this kind of self-study was called "wood-shedding" – practice your instrument, keep your mouth shut, and stay out of the way until you're competent enough to hold your own. Jazz players used to toss you off the stage if you couldn't hang. There were no participation trophies; it was survival of the fittest. If you wanted gigs – and who didn't – you had to earn them.

If we were to listen to the players that move us and then listen to the players that moved them, we could be on to something. Respect the lineage of the music? Great idea! When we're first getting it together, we kinda copy the players we dig; it's a great way to learn. Over time, we develop the way we play based on who we've listened to and what resonates with us. It's a fascinating process. It takes time, though. Not to get all Book of Proverbs on you, but ... patience is a virtue. For what it's worth, it feels pretty good when you believe you've cracked the code on whether or not The Beatles used a capo on the song "Girl." See, your ears always have your back, or something like that.

Ten percent of the bands get ninety percent of the gigs, or at least that's how it seems, right? Maybe it's because they're good enough to play them? I think that's it – that's the list. So, dear reader, when you get a gig, value it. Be on time, be in tune, be respectful of the venue, the staff, and the people who are there to watch and listen – if anyone

*You're So Vain, You Probably Think This Story's About You, Don't You?*

shows up. Remember, no one owes you their time or their money – never forget that. And while not everyone wants to hear 11-minute songs about trees, flowers, and dogs, those who do will be in your corner – it just might take time.

All we can do is keep trying, right? Stay true to your vision. And when you get work, be ready to fulfill your obligation. Decent footwear is always a plus, too. Because people do look and judge. I mean, I do ...



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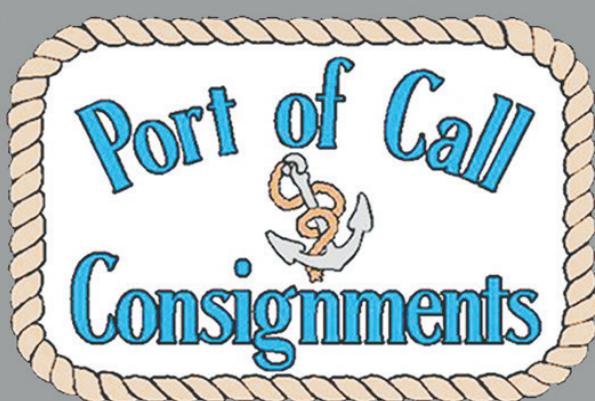
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BY LIAM SWEENEY

Devan Tracy.

**S**aratoga native Devan Tracy is an acoustic folk singer/songwriter, percussionist and road traveler. On November 25th, that road will take her to the release of her album, *Human Doing*, at Caffe Lena.

**RRX:** Tell us a little bit about yourself. You are coming to Caffe Lena. Are you doing that as a part of a tour or is this you just showing up as an individual engagement?

**DT:** So this is a very short tour. So I grew up in Saratoga Springs, and I currently live in New Hampshire as a musician. My day job is as an engineer, but I'm a musician to keep me sane, I tell everybody. So I'll be doing a CD release there on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, get my college band, get back together. I am going to be bringing some of my music teachers from Saratoga from growing up as a little bit of a reunion. But there's a mini tour. I did a CD release in February in New Hampshire, and this

will be the 2nd stop.

**RRX:** OK, so tell us a little bit about the CD. Is it new material?

**DT:** It's mostly new material. The title track, it's called "Human Doing" and it's probably the last five years' worth of songs compiled. I went through several different milestones through that period. Of course COVID happened. I also got married, bought a house and moved to New Hampshire. So I think all of those themes are part of the songs in some way, but *Human Doing*, the title track, that phrase came to me through my yoga practice. where I had a yoga teacher say, 'we're not human doings, we're human beings.' Why are we always doing? That's the inspiration for the title track, which I happened to write on a yoga retreat in New York, I think it was on the Battenkill River. We were tubing down.

**RRX:** I'm so not aware of yoga at all. I probably could stand to be

aware of yoga actually. People don't think of yoga as very kinetic. You think about the poses and stuff like that, very sedate. You don't think about it in the kinetic way. When I think of music for yoga, I'm thinking very, light jazz or very calm music. Do you think there's more to it than that? Do you think that more of the kinetic aspect of music that can be applied to yoga?

**DT:** I think so. The one thing that I think where I see the correlation between yoga and music is a mantra, that repeating; it's almost like a riff. So I've translated that. I'm trying to think of the, the exact phrasing here off the top of my head, but it's 'pause and do nothing.' And you keep repeating that phrase. A lot of what you do in yoga is you pick a phrase, and it's the mental aspect of yoga, not necessarily the kinetic, or the movement, but that repetition of a phrase to kind of embed it in your mind. I've

tried to put that in some of my songs, and also the breathing aspects. I think in a couple of songs, you'll actually hear me breathing, where normally you would want to take that out, cut that out of the mic, but that was very much intentional in some of these songs.

**RRX:** So you have that breathing in there to have that authentic sound, right?

**DT:** Exactly.

**RRX:** You do acoustic folk and also pop. I've always wondered when I hear pop music, I'm like, 'well, isn't pop just basically any other genre that happens to become popular?' I don't know if there is a standard convention of pop, maybe there is. So when you're doing, when you're writing songs with that element of pop, what would you consider that element to be as it pertains to like acoustic folk.?

**DT:** I struggle with genres, to be

honest. I agree with you. If it's pop, then it's become popular, right? So what are the aspects of pop music that make those songs popular? I think I'm still trying to figure that out and infuse that a little bit. I don't think I've figured it out. People ask me 'what type of music do you do?' And I think I just put a blanket statement acoustic folk pop without much deeper thinking than that.

**RRX:** So you recently performed with All The Best Kids in DC, how was that?

**DT:** I loved that time. I was living in DC uh prior to moving up to New Hampshire, and this was an eleven-piece funk band. We had a whole horn section, a rapper, a female vocal lead, and then I was on the keyboard and backup vocals. Then I would fill in for the drummer when she was out. So it was a great experience. It's something very different from what I had ever done. And most of us also

had full-time gigs. I was just always shocked. How do we even find a common time every week to rehearse, let alone gig? But it was a great opportunity. The rapper happened to work in the music industry in DC. He would help, he would book all the gigs, and I would just show up. It was the best of all worlds. You just show up and play music, like how much better can you get than that?

**RRX:** Now earlier you had mentioned getting your classmates together, you had gotten people close to you into your music. And I thought that was cool because not everybody brings people that are from their personal lives into their music.

**DT:** For this gig at Caffe Lena, some folks still live in Saratoga that I played with in college. I'm looping them in. My mom is also going to join me and my brother, who lives in Maine. He's gonna join me and the two of them also perform live on the

album. And actually, the producer of the album, Jason Bardeau, he happens to play bass, so I've invited him to join me up on stage. I just made a pact in the last couple of years that I'm not saying yes to any gig if it's solo. It's just to me, there's so much less joy in performing by myself. So I'd rather share that moment on stage with others. I just get a lot more joy out of that.

**RRX:** That's cool. When you were growing up, was there a lot of music in the family or was that something you kind of branched out into?

**DT:** My mom had always played music. My dad's been a wannabe, but he actually took drum lessons when I left home and left my drum set there. He said, 'you know, it's sitting here, so I might as well learn to play.' But yeah, there was always music in the house, and my brother picked up music later in life. I didn't get into songwriting until college, but I did a lot of

piano growing up and percussion and drums, and then it kind of evolved from there.

**RRX:** When you were in college, when you started songwriting, was there anything that made you start songwriting or was it just 'well, why not?'

**DT:** I don't know if there was one thing in particular, I would say the thing that comes to mind is I was starting to journal. That was again inspired by one of my yoga teachers. It was actually a requirement. We had to journal for class. And at one point, I said, 'you know what, I'm pretty sure other people are feeling these feelings that I'm feeling. So why don't I just share them with the world through song?' And that was kind of the inspiration of how I transitioned into songwriting.

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# ...2..3..4

BY CHRIS BUSONE

“The two most powerful warriors are patience and time.”

So says Leo Tolstoy, a man who knew a thing or two about warriors, war ... and, well ... peace.

When I came across this quote I began to think about time. It's what we desire most, but too often waste. And it made me think about how I use this time, my time and space in this publication, and how I can use it in the most significant, albeit occasionally sarcastic, way.

I have previously written about people who have passed on and influenced me in my life and musical endeavors. But Tolstoy's words about patience and time started me thinking that I should spend some time paying tribute to those influences who are still in the here and in the now, and deserve my acknowledgment.

That's so lengthy a list that it may be confused with the local Troy city census. So, as I did in my previous tribute piece, I've narrowed it down to a manageable number who had the patience and the time to have a positive impact on my musical, and for lack of a better term, real life. I decided to go chronologically, because well, why not?

I am the youngest sibling of six. Three boys, three girls. And as inherently annoying as I can be (yea I know it, how could I not?), my sibs were the kindest, most patient, most encouraging group of folks that anyone could ever ask for. They all took time with their little brother in their own way. But it was my eldest brother Philip, ten years my senior, who started me down the musical path.

It was the late sixties, a time full of peace, love, long hair, funny political

slogans (did we ever figure out how many kids LBJ killed today?), even funnier cigarettes, and more guitar players than you could shake a G-clef at. My brother Philip was one of those players, along with a group of his friends. They would have impromptu jam sessions in our house sometimes when my parents were out of earshot, and my brother would play alone most nights while I watched intently, yet covertly, trying to memorize the fingering madness he was perpetrating upon that guitar neck. Then, when there was a clear coast and the opportunity availed itself, I would sneak into the room where his guitar lay, a veritable prepubescent ninja, and try to mimic these digital calisthenics.

It was a good plan; I mean, the plan was working. It was. Until my brother woke up uncharacteristically early one fateful morn. But happening upon his little brother purposefully strumming a makeshift C chord on his treasured nylon 6-stringer did not send him into a full-blown berserk as you might think. He studied me with an earnest gaze of curiosity and said, “Do that again.”

My 9-year-old fingers shook as I pressed down the notes in a deliberate sequence and gave them a strum, squinting in hope upon hope that they produced a somewhat acceptable sound that might justify this breach of instrumental etiquette. When, to my complete astonishment, the sound emerged, my big brother said, “Do you even know what that is?” I shook my head quickly in the negative. “It's a C chord. Where did you learn it?”

“From watching you,” I answered. “I try to remember where your fingers are when you play, then ... well ... I do that.” His gaze now turned to a quizzical grin.

“Well, first, that's just ridiculous,” he snickered, “and I'm not even gonna ask how you could possibly pull that off. Do you know any others?”

“I know upside-down triangle!” I proclaimed, and quickly (well, relatively quickly) contorted my hand on the guitar neck.

“There are those of us, in certain circles, who call that a D chord,” he grinned. “Let me show you some others.”

And so, our lessons began. Passing his guitar back and forth at first, until he bought a new one and gifted me that one. And in between lessons, I practiced and practiced, and my siblings never complained; at least not to me anyway. The very idea that my brother, this guy I looked up to and admired so much, was actually taking the time and patience and had this belief in me was enough to feed my relentless drive to practice.

When I tell it, Philip likes to end this story by saying that in six months I could play as well as he, but that's of course not the case; it was a solid eight (remember the phrase ... inherently annoying?).

In truth, anything and everything I possess in the way of talent began with him and his time, patience, and belief in me. I love you bro.

Less than a decade after my first C chord, I was in a band. It was comprised of my lifelong friends, for as much life as we had lived at 15. We called it Chaser.

The members, as follows, were a ragtag group of Green Islanders who assembled in the cellar of a bowling alley with a dream and a couple quarts of Genny Cream Ale: Rod Choppy (guitar), Jim Lazzaro (drums), Joe Cocca (bass) and literally the glue that held us together and kept us somewhat in line, our

soundman/road manager/guy who could fix anything, John Degen.

We were together every night, either playing in some club or rehearsing until we couldn't stand upright any longer. We would plan our future and chart our course into fame, fortune, and world domination. Ya know, regular teenage stuff.

It was great fun, but make no mistake, it was hard work. Eventually, we would travel 27 to 30 days at a clip from state to state for 1, 2, 3 nights, sometimes 5 if we got lucky. Sleeping mostly in the van, but in the luckier times we'd get a band house or two hotel rooms for eight of us, roadcrew included. We spent most of the money we made after all the overhead expenses on booze, but sometimes we'd splurge on the fixins for bologna sandwiches. And we loved every single moment of it. It was all more than worth it when we got up on the stage and counted it off ... well, you know ... but it's too early for that.

We were a unit in the truest sense, transfixed on a common goal, and we fed off our commitment to each other and our love of what we were doing.

I was the singer/guitarist/songwriter of the bunch, and until we formed this group, I had had no aspirations to be in a band such as this or had even dreamed of playing and singing in any venue larger than my parents' living room (I tried to book the sun porch, but they never got back to me).

But the time, the patience (there's those warriors again), and the belief that my first bandmates bestowed upon me spirited me into creative heights that I never imagined I was capable of. Their belief in me not only inspired me to be a better musician and a better

singer-songwriter, but they also made me a better person and gave me confidence in my real life that I honestly don't think I would have today if not for them. My first bandmates were, in the very truest sense of the word, my friends, and still are today.

And for a kid who could barely talk to anyone, to have these great friends behind him, believing in him, giving him the space to stretch out and see what he was capable of, meant the world to me. I truly wish that for every kid who can't find an outlet to articulate what's burning inside of them. I wish them friends like Rod, Jimmy, Joe, and John who started me down the collaborative path of my musical life, and the lifelong path living outside myself. I couldn't have asked for better bandmates, better friends, and better times. Thanks guys, love you all.

It wasn't long before we had begun to make a name for ourselves in the local scene, even though some of us weren't

old enough to be in clubs yet (a mere technicality). But by some unexplainable twist of music and time and fate, the most sought-after, the most eminent booking agent/manager in this area and beyond took notice of us.

Bill Rezey has many talents, among them the ability to speak to you as if you are the only person in the room, the only person on his mind, and that you've been on his mind the entire time since your last conversation. That's less of a talent and more of the genuine man he really is. I truly believe he is that focused on his friends, family, and clients and wants nothing but the success for us all. He personifies patience, time, and belief. He lives Tolstoy's warriors.

He was simply the best at what he did at the time we met, and we were awestruck that he was interested in us. The playing schedule he put us on and his guidance transformed us from a young band with raw, frenetic talent into a seasoned act that he could place in

the number one club in any region. We worked (a lot), made money (a little), traveled the states and beyond, and opened up for major acts for a couple of decades, all due to Bill's expertise and tireless hard work.

That's the business side of the man. But that's not even half the man Bill Rezey is. His total, unwavering friendship and belief in me and my abilities, to this day, leave me at a loss to find words to thank him. He is someone whose opinion I respect so enormously, particularly in all things professional, that the fact that he believes in and supports my efforts is a source of pride for me beyond measure.

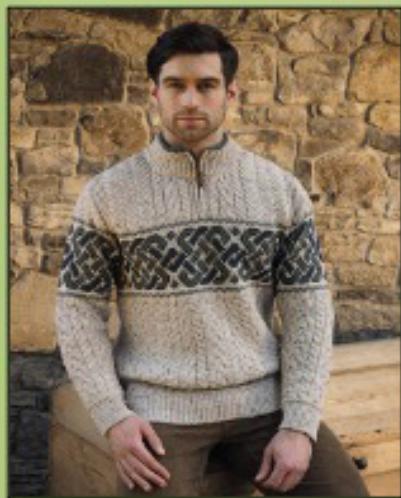
But moreover, he is my friend. And has been for the last four decades. He can buoy my spirits when they're sinking and tell me the hard truths that sometimes need telling. He fought for me in the years we were trying to score a record deal like his life depended on it. And when I felt like I let him down, let

everyone down, just wasn't good enough, he made sure to tell me that we were all in this together, and as long as we were, we could never let each other down.

There's no way I could ever repay Bill for the time, the patience, the actual monetary expense, and the blood, sweat, and whatever else he spilt for me. I can only offer him my undying friendship and thanks, for everything. Thank you, my friend.

I am acutely aware that I am not the only person who has had influences who have shaped their lives. I'm sure anyone who reads this can make their own list, and I encourage you to do so. Let's let those folks know what they mean to us while we can, while the so-called gettin' is good, and get the goods out there. I know I want these people and many more to know how much I appreciate their (you guessed it) patience and time and belief in me that propelled me up on stages all over God's green to count it off (now's the time to say it!), 2...3...4.

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A poster for the "FALLING FOR ART" event. The background features a collage of autumn leaves. At the top, "Five One ART" is written in a stylized font with "PRESENTS" underneath. Below that, the main title "FALLING FOR ART" is in large, bold, orange letters, with "A Harvest of Local Talent" in a smaller, white, serif font underneath. The date "SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22ND" and time "5:00 - 9:00 PM" are prominently displayed in yellow. To the right, there are two performance images: one of a man playing a guitar and another of a woman singing. The poster also lists "ARTISTS", "POETS", "PERFORMERS", "VENDORS", "SILENT AUCTION", and "FOOD & DRINK" in white text. A note at the bottom left says "A PORTION OF THE PROCEEDS BENEFIT COHOES HIGH SCHOOL'S ART PROGRAM". The bottom right features logos for "J&P's CATERING CO.", "Five One ART", "133 REMSEN ST. COHOES, NY 12047", "Brought To You By", "UNDER", "Paint COHOES", and "Art Studio & Gallery". A QR code is located in the bottom left corner.

# Prog Digest

BY KLYDE KADDLEHUMPER

**W**riter's block sucks. There – I said it.

Now, gentle readers, I can hear you saying to yourselves, "But Klyde, with all those voices in your head, how is that possible?"

Besides the fact that they are all yelling at each other – what, you think they all get along? You have GOT to be kidding me.

Well, without going into too much detail, this has been a year. And, from time to time, as you are all aware, things get to ya and make it a little tough to focus.

Without the really gory details – and there have been a number of cringeworthy moments – it involves the following:

- An internal body part that decided to just flap around.
- Lots of needles to poke at things, take blood, put me under (oooo – reminds me of a Dream Theater song), and generally torque me off.
- Inert gas (C3F8) bubbles.
- Silicon fluid.

And my Andromeda Strain moment.

Constant Companion and I have not had a ton of fun; shows have been at a minimum. Flying completely out of the question (still is) and – good lord, is this old body not liking the "positioning."

Needless (or is that needles) to say – it's put ol' Klyde off his game.

In a soon-to-come piece, we'll go over the import, in one way or another, of a number of folks who've passed in the last year, but one occurred this week (these articles get to page a couple weeks before release – you do the math) that we all know, if not in name.

Drew Struzan.

Movie posters, movie posters, movie posters.

You went to a movie – you saw these in the lobby all the time.

"Angels in the Outfield." "Big Trouble in Little China." "Back to the Future." "Blade Runner." "Harry Potter(s)." "Hellboy." "Raiders" (and "Indys"). "Wrath of Khan." "Star Wars" (like, the original three).

From the '70s to very recently, his images helped define what we saw. How we saw it.

That '75 oil of Alice Cooper in a black tux – Drew.

Commercial work aside, Drew was an individual first and an artist second.

There's a lot of artwork in our

household. Heck – we don't have the walls for all we really want to display.

Some originals, many limited edition – like the two Mark Wilkinsons. For those not aware of his work, he's the illustrator of Iron Maiden, Fish, Judas Priest, and Marillion. Logos and all.

There are concert posters here – including my coveted original, banned-by-Radio-City-Music-Hall, Grateful Dead 1980 Halloween run poster. Tower of Power, Zappa, Todd Rundgren, Willie Nile ... and the beat goes on.

For Drew Struzan, his idols were the likes of impressionists Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Cezanne. I implore you all to check out museum listings for exhibits. We are big fans of MOMA in

NYC – just take a day trip if you must, and go there.

Remember those 12" albums I keep raving about? The artwork was half the reason many of us picked up a record to hear what was inside. Remember the Ohio Players? This 15-or-16-year-old boy was drawn to "Skin Tight," "Fire," or "Honey" because of the cover art ... then there was the funk on the inside.

We eat not only with our mouths, but our eyes.

Drew's family really said it well: "Life should be full of love and beauty." Until next time.

Klyde



Photo from Shutterstock.com

# Lucy Kaplansky

BY LIAM SWEENEY

**L**ucy Kaplansky once tried to run away from music. And if you hear her songs online or in person, you can feel the path she ran on. She will be bringing decades of folk singing to Caffe Lena on November 23.

**RRX:** You're going to be playing at Caffe Lena on November 23. I know you've been to Lena before; what do you think about it? Do you think it has anything that you don't see anywhere else?

**LK:** It's a really great venue. I mean, it was always a good venue and a fun venue, but now it's one of the premier intimate venues in the country, with the sound and the way it's set up, the renovation, it's incredible. It is just a total pleasure to play there. Plus, their live streaming is really high quality, and people like to watch that too.

**RRX:** Do you have anything coming up for us? A new album, new song, new video, new recipe for stuffing and gravy? Anything on the horizon?

**LK:** I've got a new album that came out in January that's called "The Lucy Story." Somebody called it a musical autobiography. It's mostly never-released tracks from my entire career, a lot of live recordings, album outtakes, and then some demos that people have never heard. And it literally goes back to my bedroom when I was 16. They're almost all cover songs and just songs I've sung over the years, and I've never put on a record before. So that's new.

**RRX:** When you're going through music to put an album together and you're looking through all the live

stuff, do you have to pore through all your live work to find the good stuff, or do you know right away, like "that's the one I want"?

**LK:** I have no idea. I have to go back and listen. Definitely have to go back and listen. Then there is also the guy who produced it, who engineered and mixed the album. His name is Mark Dan. He has this software where you can take an existing track and really make it sound better. So he took some of my live recordings that were OK sonically and made them really good sonically. So there was that too.

**RRX:** Two of the passions in your life are music and psychology. There's a commonality in that they both help people feel better. And you were playing music before you had earned your PhD. What drew you to psychology?

**LK:** It's a complicated story, but I'm gonna try and simplify it. I was really running away from music when I went into psychology. I always wanted to do music. I was kind of too neurotic to let myself pursue the thing I really wanted. So I was literally running away, and when I finally figured that out with some really good psychotherapy, I realized I had to go back to music, that I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I didn't do music. And then I got too busy with music, and that was the end of my psychology career.

There are similarities in the sense that I guess they both probe, at least some of the time, the human psyche. People often say, 'Is music therapy?' Having been a psychologist, therapy is therapy. Music can make you feel

and experience things in a very unique way, for sure. And move you. But it's not therapy per se. Therapy is where you're developing new understandings of the way you function and your motivations, and try to function in a more adaptive way. How's that for a long answer?

**RRX:** I read that your father was a well-known mathematician. And a classical pianist, and that he made music for you to play, a math-oriented kind of music. Can you describe that?

**LK:** He wrote songs just as a hobby, and he did write a couple of songs that are based on math. And one of them, if you go to my website, was a song about pi. There's a music video that my husband directed of the song. It's hilarious, and years ago, when I was first starting out performing, I was trying to think about something funny I could have in my shows. And my husband said, "Why don't you do one of your dad's songs?" So that's how I ended up doing them. He didn't write them for me. He just wrote them, and he was thrilled when I would perform them sometimes, when I was performing in California, where my parents lived. He would come sit in with me on piano on his songs. We'd do a couple of his songs together. But they were his songs that he wrote for fun. I just kind of, what's the word? I took them over that way.

**RRX:** OK, so you've been in and out of the folk scene for decades. You've seen the music transform in ways the average listener probably might not catch. Have you seen anything that you think has been evolving in folk music since you started? In

the music itself, or in the community.

**LK:** There's just been so many changes. I mean, I've been part of the folk community for almost going on 50 years. It's changed multiple times. There was a real kind of folk revival in the '60s and '70s. And then, singer-songwriters really kind of became the thing. I was friends with Suzanne Vega when she first started out. And when she came along in 1986, that really was when women singer-songwriters started to be able to have real success. So she was one of the first, I think. And then there was radio to go along with all that, and they played people like me and Richard Shindell, and then that all went away. But in the last few years, the radio went away. It's just very different now. They don't play people like me anymore. So then streaming came along and kind of decimated CD sales. So there's been many, many changes over the years. A lot of them not really good for people like me. And yet people like me, we soldier on because there is an audience out there. But it's harder to get to them. I guess that's the point.

**RRX:** What would you like to tell people who are gonna come see you in November at Caffe Lena?

**LK:** I will be doing old songs, new songs, and I always take requests because it makes the whole thing more interesting. Well, people like it, and it makes it more interesting for me to not know what I'm going to play and sometimes play things I haven't played in a long time. I'll be telling some stories, and I hope people find it fun and also moving.



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BY NEOPTOLEMUS

“ So long, Pop. I’m off to check my tiger trap!”

These words launched the Bill Watterson comic strip, *Calvin and Hobbes*, on November 18, 1985.

Calvin, a 6-year-old boy with a seemingly unlimited imagination, and his best friend, Hobbes, a stuffed tiger who comes to life in Calvin's private universe, wend their way through a variety of plots, including reckless sled and wagon rides, fierce dinosaur encounters, space monsters, evil babysitters, and lots more. Recurring supporting cast includes his mom and dad (not your typical comic strip parents); Suzy, a neighbor girl with her own stuffed animal, Mr. Bun; Miss Wormwood, Calvin's teacher (and sometimes alien nemesis); Rosalyn, Calvin's tormenting and tormented babysitter; and Moe, the school bully.

Back in the day, as new strips appeared in the newspaper, one could

never predict what plot might ensue ... but they were always worth reading. Sometimes it would make you laugh, sometimes lament Calvin's situation, and sometimes just make you ponder the meaning of life. It always had an impact on the reader. Whether it was the gloriously colorful art or the imaginative storyline, the reader felt absorbed by the comic, ready and eager to share the duo's adventures. It was an uplifting, almost spiritual, experience.

Which brings us to the latest exhibit at the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, NY: “Exploring Calvin and Hobbes,” running until December 31, 2025, a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the strip, and the 30th anniversary of its end on that date in 1995. This exhibit first appeared at the Billy Ireland Cartoon and Library Museum in 2014, then travelled to Angoulême, France, before traveling to the

Fenimore for this 40th anniversary occasion.

This colorful exhibit spans the gamut of the *Calvin and Hobbes* world. There are important historical artifacts, such as the original prototype strip, with a hair-covering-the-eyes main character; an original drawing of the first true C&H strip; and a caricature of Bill Watterson working at his drawing table. Hardcore fans will love these. There are also numerous, large-as-life, colorful depictions of the two beloved main characters. And, of course, there are representative strips for several of the different themes of the strip: there's the cardboard box converted into the “Transmogrifier” (and later, a Time Machine); there's Spaceman Spiff, fighting against a six-year-old's worst school experience —boredom — complete with fierce, dominating space aliens threatening to destroy Earth and invade Calvin's

attention-span; there's the ever-dangerous arrival home from school, triggering Hobbes' welcoming attack on Calvin (Hobbes IS a tiger, after all). Viewing these, I experienced a wave of joyful nostalgia, with fond memories of reading the strip in the newspaper.

The genesis of the Fenimore exhibit began with Ms. Julia Madore, the Director of Exhibitions at the Fenimore Art Museum, who thought a *Calvin and Hobbes* exhibit might be a public-pleasing event, for both adults and children. Madore, a dedicated C&H fan who remembers “reading the [Calvin & Hobbes] books, and always finding the humor and the art in them really funny and intelligent,” reached out to the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum to inquire if a C&H exhibit at the Fenimore might be possible.

Madore says, “Imagine if you knew nothing about *Calvin and*

Hobbes — this exhibit gives you an overview of some of the main themes ... like when he [Calvin] is in school and imagining, literally, being anywhere else ... and, having been a student, knowing which classes I day-dreamed in, I just really liked them."

Ms. Jenny E. Robb, Head Curator of Comics and Cartoon Art, and Associate Professor, University Libraries, responded affirmatively to Mandore's inquiry. "It's our most popular and most requested collection," says Robb. "We often get inquiries from museums that want to borrow original Calvin and Hobbes artwork or host a traveling exhibition."

Robb continues: "Exploring Calvin & Hobbes has only traveled to one other venue so far. It was part of the French Angoulême International Comics Festival in 2015, the year after Watterson won the Grand Prix, which is a lifetime achievement award. The Fenimore is the first venue to host the exhibition since then, so this is a rare opportunity for fans to see the original art."

"In my role as Curator, the first thing I did was to reread the 3-volume Complete Calvin and Hobbes collection. I put post-it notes on all the pages with a strip that might be a candidate for the exhibition because it had a particularly funny gag, a poignant message, or fantastic artwork. When I was done, more than half the pages had post-its, which would be far too many to include in one exhibit! I was spoiled for choice because the quality of the strip was so high throughout the 10-year run, and because our holdings include all but a small number that Watterson gave away. While I was reading, some themes stood out to me, such as the rhythm of the seasons and the theme of friendship. I also noted the devices that Watterson came back to again and again throughout the run of the strip, such as the wagon and sled

rides, Calvin's alter-ego Spaceman Spiff, and Hobbes attacking Calvin. Once I decided on which themes and devices I wanted to highlight—basically the structure of the exhibition—I was able to go back and whittle down the number of strips to something much more manageable. Of course, that was the toughest part of the project."

Robb worked with Bill Watterson, the creator of Calvin and Hobbes, to write the catalog for the Fenimore exhibit. "Mr. Watterson told me from the beginning that he didn't want to choose the strips himself," Robb says, "but he did review my selections and approved the overall themes. He was wonderful to work with throughout the planning process, even helping with the exhibition design."

"I'm fortunate to work with wonderful colleagues, who have assisted with the logistics of getting the exhibit ready to travel, everything from preparing the contract to building and packing the crates. Our partners at the Fenimore have also been amazing to work with. It's incredible how much work goes into traveling an exhibition!"

Robb concluded, "I'm delighted that more people will have the opportunity to see Mr. Watterson's original artwork!" I'm sure it's safe to say that Bill Watterson feels the same way.

C&H no longer appears in newspapers. But you can still read daily installments at <https://www.gocomics.com/calvinandhobbes>.

Take the final advice of six-year-old Calvin: "It's a magical world, Hobbes, ol' buddy ... let's go exploring!"



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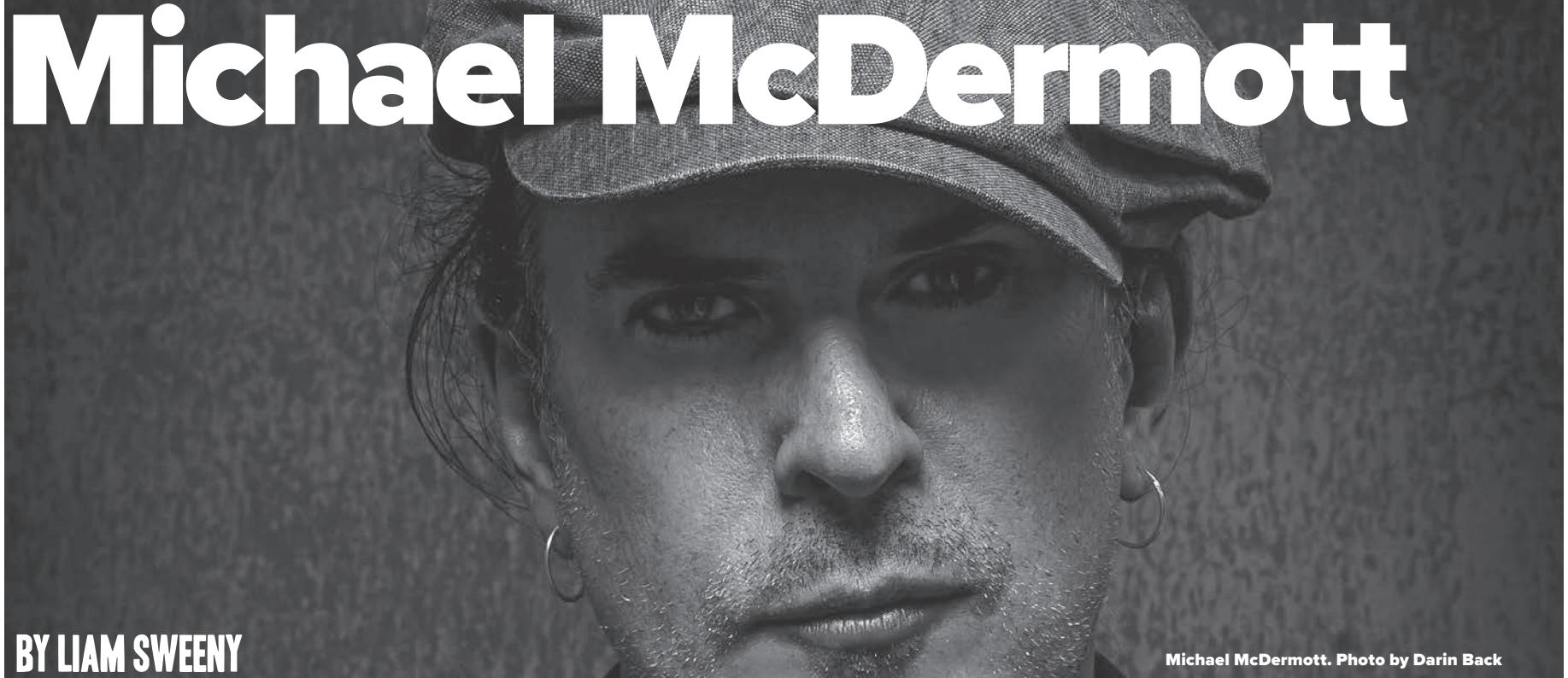
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# Michael McDermott



Michael McDermott. Photo by Darin Back

BY LIAM SWEENEY

**Y**ou are known by the company you keep. And you may also be known by the tired cliches in your ammo clip, but singer/songwriter Michael McDermott is known by a voice that can hypnotize a listener like two yellow strips on the roads that take him from club to coffee house. And having horror author Stephen King as a passionate fan doesn't hurt. McDermott will be at Caffe Lena on November 13.

**RRX:** Tell me a little bit about yourself.

**MM:** My first record came out in 1991 on Warner Bros. The first song on the first album did well, and then I put out three major label albums, each one kind of diminishing returns. Until one day, EMI in New York just didn't answer the phones. That was kind of the end of the music industry. I didn't know what to do. It was 1997, maybe. That was the beginning of the end for the industry, really. And I kind of made a mess of things in my life personally, and was looking at three to six years in jail. So when you're talking about messing up...

**RRX:** Industrial-grade messing up?

**MM:** Yeah, I was a professional. I was a master, really. I found my calling, and so anyway, I have now been clean and sober for what is it now? It's gonna be 11 years in January. You just say you don't believe in second chances? Well, I've had more than that. So things have been good. I always liken it to, like I went out, and I was invited into a party, and I went outside to have a smoke, and then they locked the doors when I was in the backyard. So I've been waiting a long time to try to get in, and then I found that there's a bathroom window that was cracked open, and I climbed back in, so I'm not gonna go out and smoke anymore, and I'm gonna stay as long as I can.

**RRX:** In writing, they talk about incidents that incite action. John Wick was a peaceful pet owner at one point. Were you always into music, or did some magical thing kinda happen to drive you there?

**MM:** It was kind of a magic thing that happened. Like, I remember the thing that kind of turned it. Sometime, when I

was around 12 or 13, I heard the song "The River" by Bruce Springsteen. And I thought, man, that was just unbelievable. It was like a little movie to me. And I thought, damn, that's amazing. And then when I discovered Bob Dylan, it was just, it was over. That was it. And so ever since then, I've been trying to shine his shoes.

I would take pilgrimages out to Greenwich Village in high school to walk down Bleecker Street, and it was like going to the Holy Land. That was kind of it for me. I knew I wanted to do that. Also in 8th grade, I saw the Rolling Stones on the "Tattoo You" tour, and I saw Keith Richards. I thought, my God, that guy is something else, you know? I didn't ever want to be Mick Jagger, I wanted to be Keith Richards. And then in high school, I had bands, and the singers would never f\*\*\*ing show up. I was like, "F\*\*\*ing Tim's not here again," so I just stood in. I was singing until the singer got there ... and then it just kind of stuck. I just thought, f\*\*\* it, I'll just do it myself.

**RRX:** Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan. We're not talking about a band name, but

a person's name. People don't always pay attention to the band when it's a person's name. When you're doing your own solo stuff, how do you find the right band backing you up?

**MM:** I've had a Chicago band. It's just not financially viable for me to take them on the road. I tour Europe a lot, and I got an Italian band. It's almost like the Chuck Berry thing, where I just get a band locally if I can. But most times, I just do solo. I'd rather be an outstanding solo artist than an average guy singer in a rock band. So that's kind of the thing. I've had my loyal guys here, but unfortunately, it's just like - doing Caffe Lena or doing an East Coast run - it's just me.

I even had Stephen King play on a song. It was a funny story. I was playing basketball at my sister's house one day, and she yelled out the window. I had a phone call, and I said, "I'm in the middle of a game. I'll call him back." And she's like, "It's Stephen King." And I said, "The writer?" And she's like, "Yeah." I said, "What the f\*\*\*?" And as I went in and I got on the phone, I was like, "How did

you find me at my sister's house?" But anyway, he was like, "Hey, Michael, Steve King, big fan. You know, listen, I'm coming to Chicago." And I was like, "Are you sure you're not looking for Michael McDonald? Like, I don't understand. What's going on?" And he said, "No, I used lyrics of yours in my new book," and I said, "Are you kidding?" I said, "Nobody told me." So anyway, we became friends. He came down to Memphis and played on the record. And that was fun. I use guys in Nashville and I use guys in Chicago, and with modern technology, you could do that without having to spend a fortune in the studio, and that's great.

**RRX:** That's cool. He's a bass player, right? I thought Stephen King was a bass player.

**MM:** He plays guitar.

**RRX:** Oh, okay. I love the idea of a music scene being more than the sum of its parts, that there's a spirit of a music scene that transcends just the people in the venues and the players. You've been

everywhere. Is there any place that had a scene that you were just blown away by, more so than anywhere else?

**MM:** Well, that's a great question. I was in Seattle in '92, you know, and that was Pearl Jam, Nirvana, Soundgarden. They were all happening right then. And that was pretty incredible, to be in the Seattle music scene. It was early 1992. So that was cool. However, I will say Memphis has really got something special besides the cheesy Beale Street bars. They just play music differently down there, and I don't know if it's because it's kind of below sea level, but there is something really deep about it. I haven't been to Memphis now in a couple of years. But yeah, Seattle '91, that's an easy one. It was a cultural thing, besides being even a musical thing ... I felt the power of it, you know? I was doing my folk singer song stuff, but I had Dave Navarro from Jane's Addiction come in and play. So that would be my answer, I guess - Seattle '91, Memphis in the late '90s.



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# Mike Viola

BY ROB SMITTIX

**R**RX: So, how's your day been?  
**MV:** It's been good. It's been busy ... making music. Just been doing some writing and recording. It's my favorite thing to do, but I go into a bit of a time warp, that's why I lost track of time. Sorry I was late.

**RRX:** I wasn't worried about it. I was online looking at your Wikipedia stuff. I don't normally do that but I was like ... I'm gonna check it out, and I saw lots of really cool credits. Of course, "That Thing You Do!" and all sorts of credits. But I saw a couple that stuck out ... The Figgs, for one, they're like local heroes here.

**MV:** Yeah, exactly.

**RRX:** And Rasputina. A lot of people don't know that Melora Creager, last I knew, lived in Troy.

**MV:** Oh, that's right. Yeah, totally.

**RRX:** So I was like, oh, that's kind of cool, a couple of our hometown heroes on your resume.

**MV:** I'm inextricably connected to

the Figgs. I played in the band for a little while and toured with them, I was on a record or two, and Pete Donnelly played in Candy Butchers. He was a huge part of what I was doing with that band. And to this day, we are still making music together. He went on tour with me last year. He opened up some shows, and I made a record with him in my home studio, Barebones, where I make all my records. It was just a fantastic experience to be making music together again, and you know? It really was just like picking up where we left off.

**RRX:** That's the best.

**MV:** Great record! If you haven't heard that Pete Donnelly record, it's really good. It just came out.

**RRX:** I'll definitely have to check it out. Isn't it great doing what you love for a living?

**MV:** It really is. Let's see ... technically, it was four years, but two of those years were COVID; I worked as an A&R

person for Universal Records, and that sucked!

**RRX:** A real job.

**MV:** It was my only real job I've ever had. But I wanted to try it because I was offered the job out of the blue. I was on the road playing guitar with Ryan Adams, and my phone was blowing up; it was a headhunter or whatever trying to get me to work for Universal Music. I'm like ... uh, I guess so. I tried that. It was so dumb. I made some cool records, but the job sucked.

**RRX:** I've had lots of real jobs, but I do this now 100% full-time again. However, my wife is the bread-winner. But I love what I do.

**MV:** The money always follows where the good energy goes, that's what I feel like, you know?

**RRX:** I'll have to work on my energy (laughs). I see you're living in LA, but your most recent album is entitled "Rock of Boston." Is it safe to assume you're a Boston guy?

**MV:** Yeah, I'm a Boston guy, born and bred. My formative years ... I learned how to do what I do, mostly in New York, I think, when I was in my 20s. And then I moved to LA, I guess in 2008. So I've been here for a chunk of time. It feels like home, I really love it here, but it's definitely like the East is pulling us back.

**RRX:** And we're glad that you're gonna be coming to the Northeast again. I'm also enjoying this conversation, that's my style ... I'd rather not bombard you with overdone questions.

**MV:** Like how I learned how to play music and stuff, right?

(Both Laugh)

**RRX:** Totally!

**MV:** That's my favorite thing to do, just unpack what's going on in the world around me and what's going on with you, you know what I mean?

**RRX:** That I do. Oh, I also saw on your Wiki page that you have a credit for "Club Penguin." What's that about?



Mike Viola. Photo by Charlie Weinmann

**MV:** It's really funny cause, you know? I'm in my 50s, so "Club Penguin" to me was just some dumbass show that was on TV when my little kid was watching it. But it's really funny, those little kids that watched that show have grown up, and sometimes at my shows, they'll request some of the songs from "Club Penguin." I sang a couple of the songs.

**RRX:** Wait till I tell my kids that I talked to you, a guy who sang on "Club Penguin"!

**MV:** That's gonna be the most impressive. It really is funny. Especially when I toured in Europe, there were a lot of, like, young adults requesting this song called "Ghosts Can Dance," and I'm like ... I don't even know that song. But anyway ...

**RRX:** That's pretty cool, though, man. I imagine you still get some royalties coming in from some of these projects?

**MV:** I call it mailbox money. From

"That Thing You Do!", I'll still get checks for like nine cents.

**RRX:** But they start out nice, and those are just some really cool credits to have. I was overly impressed.

**MV:** Oh, that's cool, man. It's like we were saying earlier, if you do what you love, the money follows. Someone will call you for something. You'll get the gig

**RRX:** Fortunately, there's room for you and me to do what we love, but honestly, if everybody did what they loved ... s\*\*\* wouldn't get done.

**MV:** Yeah, I guess you might be right. Oh s\*\*\*!

**RRX:** I was really digging the new music. I was checking out, and what I mean by that is I would listen to it on purpose on my own time. I support everybody, but you know? They could be my best friends, but I don't always love all of their songs.

**MV:** Yes, I know. I'm glad it resonates with you. I grew up listening to local Boston radio, and "Rock of Boston"

was actually the slogan for WBCN, one of the big Boston radio stations. I grew up listening to a lot of classic rock. It wasn't classic at the time; it was just rock, but I just kind of leaned into it. For the last three records I've made, I really felt like leaning into the s\*\*\* I really love, you know?

**RRX:** That's what you gotta do.

**MV:** Glad it's resonating.

**RRX:** Well, listen, I appreciate your time. Anything else that you would want to tell people before we wrap it up?

**MV:** Oh, I just remembered because I was on a call about it this morning. I have a book coming out. It's a photo-journal with writing for each photo. It's like a couple hundred pages or whatever, and it's about the years 1980 to 1984, growing up in Boston. Like being on the Boston rock scene and the crazy s\*\*\* from when I was a teenager. I was like 14 during those years. It's got some cool local flavor, a lot of cool stories and runs in with some rock legends and stuff

like that. So that book's coming out, it's called "Superkid." That might be something to mention.

**RRX:** No, we're mentioning that for sure. I love that.

**MV:** Cool. I'll send you the blurb from the publisher. They haven't circulated it to the press yet, so this would be the first announcement of it!

**RRX:** Exclusive Xperience announcement - you heard it here first!

"Superkid" is a photographic journal that illustrates the thrill, confusion, and disenchantment of growing up and becoming an artist along the way. Thrust into the spotlight at 14 years old and dubbed a rock music "prodigy" on the Boston rock scene in the 1980s, a time when that sound dominated the airwaves, Viola narrates how his seemingly straightforward path to stardom bent in unexpected directions.

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## Brian Zink (cont.)

Continued from Page 11

drumheads, Vic Firth sticks, and my trusty DW 9000 pedals with cool purple sparkle grip tape on them! I've used that set of pedals for the last decade and a half at least, and they still feel the best. My setup for when I'm playing the metal stuff is considerably larger. 6" and 8" Concert toms. 10" and 12" racks. 14" and 16" floors, and a bigger 22" bass drum. Way more cymbals, but still all the same brands. More fun to play, less fun to set up at venues.

**RRX:** Are you a drum collector?

**BZ:** Yes, but in a functional sense, so says me anyway. I'm sure my wife (or soon-to-be, depending on when this is published) would say otherwise. I buy gear with the intention to use it, and I do use almost all of it. Even some of the more "collectible" items I have are in rotation. I've always felt like drums want to be played, not sit on a shelf. Obviously, some gear inevitably sees more action than other gear. I have my favorite snares or rides or hi-hats that are my go-to stuff, but having options, especially if you're playing in a lot of different rooms or situations, is imperative to sounding right on the gig or in the studio.

**RRX:** Tell me about your first band/gig.

**BZ:** The first band I remember playing in was with two kids I went to high school with, called Kids In Play. Pretty creative band name for a bunch of teenagers, so I thought. That was my first time being in that situation and getting to record stuff I actually came up with my own parts for. It was short-lived but a good experience. I've had a few different "first gigs" that stand out to me. My first gig filling for Jason with Sludge Factory. My first gig and tour with Battlecross. My first gig in Europe. My first gig with the Accents. I've been fortunate to work with some pretty cool people who have kept me working, and in this business, that's a good thing. Always better to have

more first gigs than last gigs, I think.

**RRX:** And who are you playing with now?

**BZ:** My main gig since 2021 is with the Accents. Locally, they surely don't need an introduction since they've been active in the area since 1958. Benny Canavaro, the founder of the band, was

the drummer. His sons, Joe and Frank, who have been in the band most of their lives, run it now. When he retired from playing, the band managed to get quite a who's who list of local talent on the throne. Given all of that, I feel like in many ways I'm upholding a very important legacy by being the drummer in that particular band. It's a very different gig than the one I had prior to it.

I'm also the drummer in Battlecross. Thrash metal out of Detroit is only a little bit on the opposite end of the spectrum from a wedding dance band. I toured with them from 2014 up until our final we're actively on indefinite hiatus starting now" show in 2022. Hopefully, the stars will align in the next few months, and there'll be some new music sooner rather than later.

**RRX:** That would be great! Who influences your playing now?

**BZ:** Presently, I've been on a massive Vinnie Colaiuta and Sean Reinert kick. I am someone who ingests music retrospectively, for the most part I've come to realize. There are a plethora of great drummers who have material from decades ago that I'd somehow missed or didn't give enough time to growing up. It seems like every year, there are a handful of records I'll discover or rediscover and really deep dive on, critically listen to, and take influence and inspiration from.

The two big ones this year have been Death's "Human" and Sting's "Ten Summoner's Tales." Kind of an ironic dichotomy when you think about it, given the two records' overall vibes. However,

Vinnie and Sean are both players who could kind of do it all, and are truly what can be considered drummers' drummers. I'm sure Vinnie is a bit more of a household name than Sean for a lot of drummers, but both had such tremendous ability inside and outside of their respective genres. Such great feel, intuition, groove, tastefulness, creativity, execution, and so much facility on the kit. I think people forget that Vinnie was on a Megadeth record, too! Both have had a major impact on what I've been playing a practicing this year for sure. I can actively hear it seeping into my playing.

**RRX:** Incredible players. I love Vinnie's work with Zappa. If you could play drums for anyone, who would it be? Put together your dream band.

**BZ:** First and foremost, I'd put Rush back together in a heartbeat if I could. That's a dream band for me. I don't even want to sit in. There's only one guy for that as far as I'm concerned, and it would be a treat to see them live in their element just one more time. Just one more mind-blowing drum solo!

That said, there's a ton of bands or artists that I'd love to sit in with, though; Steely Dan, Slayer, The Grateful Dead, John Coltrane, Oasis, Alice in Chains, Marcus Miller, Van Halen ... I could go on forever.

**RRX:** Well, your wish is coming true! Tell me about your favorite gig or performance so far.

**BZ:** I've been fortunate to play a lot of great shows over the years, so narrowing it down to one is really difficult. My first time playing with Battlecross in New York City was pretty cool. We

were direct support for GWAR on their 30th anniversary tour, and we played the big room at Webster Hall. My parents came out to the show, and it was the first time seeing me in the band.

We played a great set, and Pustulus from GWAR came out and played

Pantera's "F\*\*king Hostile" to close our set. Video is still on the interwebs if anyone wants to see it. The thing with the New York City fans is that they have seen it all, so the bar to impress them is pretty high when you play there. They were super into it and really fired up, and it was a special night for me. There's a bunch of them! That said, my favorite gig is always the next one!

**RRX:** Any gig Horror Stories?

**BZ:** There are always little things that can take you out of a gig. Gear issues, a disarray of endless cables leading to everywhere and nowhere on stage with no organizational thought put into it whatsoever for the drummer to just have to walk over, physical issues and pains. But those are pretty normal things that can crop up from time to time, and you learn to accept them, adjust, and rise above. The two things that come to mind are opening the mainstage at Knotfest back in 2015 and my second gig with Battlecross the same year. The Knotfest gig went great from a playing standpoint. It was one of the biggest shows I'd played up to that point, and we really played great. Truly a great experience. The issue was when we were loading off the stage, and I kindly asked a few stagehands not to touch a few specific pieces of gear (my snare in the case), only to turn around seconds later and watch someone pick it up, the snare fall off the stand, then proceed to roll down a flight of 10-15 metal stairs side stage, and eventually come to rest on a landing at the bottom. The sound it made on the way down was indescribable. Needless to say, I was not so happy a camper.

The other is my second gig ever with Battlecross. As I stated earlier in the questions, I got offered that gig on 10 days' notice, and it was a bit of a whirlwind, to say the least. Our rehearsals and first show went pretty great, all things considered. I wasn't naive enough

to think I had it mastered by any stretch of the imagination, but at least knew the ability to pull the material off well was somewhere in there. The next night, we were playing in Milwaukee, and during the second song, I got off from the band. The issue was, the material wasn't in my muscle memory yet, and so I started thinking while I was playing, which is dangerous territory if the stuff you're playing is rehearsed enough to be automatic. It snowballed, and we drifted further apart. We got back on eventually, but I was rattled. We start the next song, and the same thing happens. I was so obviously in my own head, and it seemed like that happened in most of the songs that night. It was excruciating and seemed like it went on forever. To date, if anyone asks, I can say, with certainty, it was the worst gig I have ever played in my professional career. I was too inexperienced and not as seasoned as I am now. I was so mad at myself, which was obvious to the other guys, and they cut me some slack, reassured me they had picked me for a reason, and knew I could do it. We moved forward, and I can say, with a great sigh of relief, I've never had a gig that's come close to that ever again. In hindsight, it was a crucial learning experience for me at a very pivotal time in my development, and I learned a lot from it.

I also got super sick on a tour in Europe for like two weeks because of a sandwich I decided to eat in Hungary. I sensed before I ate it that something was

amiss, and I was starving and ate it anyway. Of course, I was throwing up for days after that and still had to do the shows. Not a job you can really call in sick to after all. Nothing worse than being sick on tour, especially in

Europe. All that good food you can't eat. At least I managed to keep it together for the shows, and that's really the most important part.

**RRX:** Ugh! I'm so sorry! Any future plans? When is the next gig?

**BZ:** The immediate next big gig on my schedule is my wedding on 10/18. I've played so many weddings with the Accents at this point that it'll be a welcome chance to attend one and not be on the bandstand. I also just so happen to be the groom in this case.

Beyond that, the Accents are busy year-round, and we have gigs from now through December and are already booked into 2026. I have some pretty substantial studio work coming up in December and January that I'm working on right now. Some really cool prog-metal stuff. It's a fun challenge because it's an album's worth of material that spans all sorts of genres, dynamics, time signatures, and feels, and is keeping me busy insofar as writing. Most exciting of late, I'm also hoping to get some new Battlecross material worked on and begin the file sending process between now and the end of the year, too!

**RRX:** We're looking forward to it all! Thanks for being here, and congratulations on your wedding!!



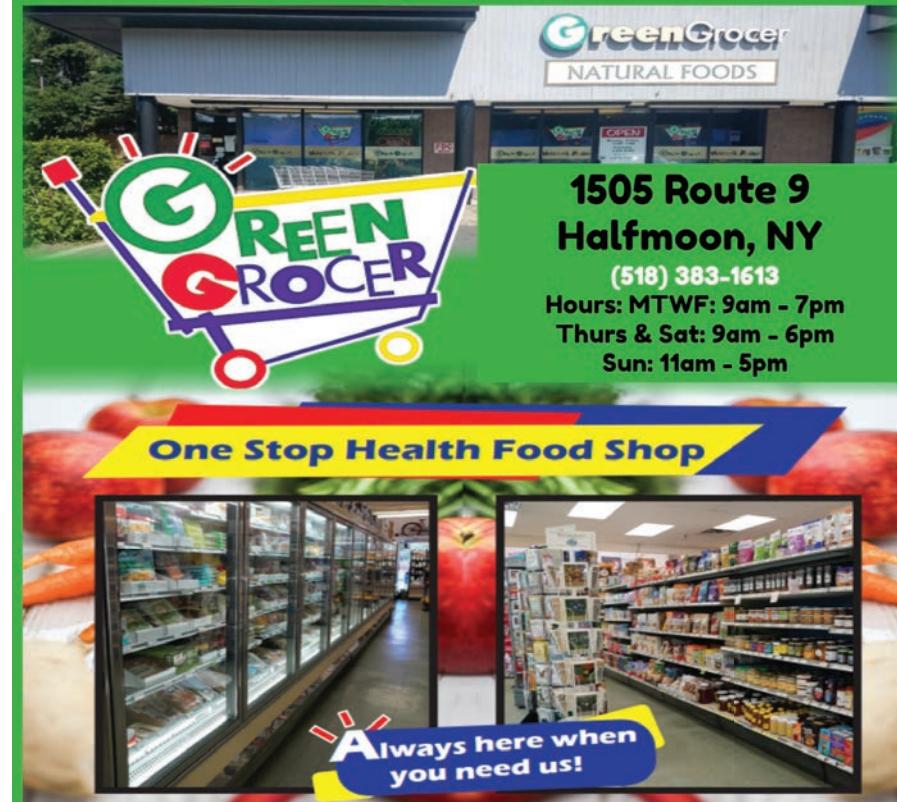
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**11/8:** The Under Dawgs 7pm  
**11/9:** Second Sunday Bluegrass Jam 5:30pm  
**11/13:** Open Mic Featuring Chris Sanders 6pm  
**11/14:** The Bear Bones Project 8pm  
**11/15:** The Big Happy wsg- Shortwave Radio 8pm  
**11/20:** Open Mic featuring Jeremy Walz & Friends 6pm  
**11/21:** The Wheel (Music of the Grateful Dead and Beyond) 8pm  
**11/22:** Hammerhead Horns 7pm  
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# ‘L’ IS FOR LYN, LISSIE & LED ZEPPELIN: THE RECORD FILE BY TONY MASTRIANNI

## Lyn Christopher: “Lyn Christopher” reissue (Real Gone Music)

The 1973 self-titled debut record from vocalist Lyn Christopher is a beguiling blend of pop and R&B sounds and one of the most collectible releases of its era. Lyn’s awesome vocals are backed by some of New York City’s finest studio musicians and features the first appearance on record by Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons of KISS, who contributed background vocals to two tracks. (People can say what they want about KISS, but their debut self-titled album the following year was a killer album). Lyn’s most influential song here, “Take Me with You,” has been sampled by many artists, including Mobb Deep’s Havoc, LL Cool J, 50 Cent, The Game, and Smut Peddlers. The production is great, and the audio is top shelf.

Also recommended from this label is: **Better Than Ezra: “Deluxe” (2-LP green vinyl)**

Hard to believe that this multi-platinum record—boasting the #1 Modern Rock single “Good”—has never been widely available on vinyl. Originally self-released by Better Than Ezra in 1993 and re-released by Elektra in 1995, Deluxe provides a ticket back to that beloved jangle-pop, college radio sound. Also features the alternative hit singles “In the Blood” and “Rosealia.” 2-LP emerald green vinyl pressing inside a gatefold jacket, reissued with the full support of the band!

For those of you who don’t know who Lissie is, you are about to find out. One of my favorite woman crooners over the last several years, she has been recording for some 15 years, originating

in Illinois in 2010. Since then, the indie folk/rock balladeer has become a highly acclaimed international act with a string of albums. Her latest issue is the EP “Promises,” which shines bright as a selection of some of her favorite cover songs. The singer/songwriter has an arresting voice, and her music is uniquely suited to her sing-talk delivery style. I had the opportunity to speak to her recently, and here is what she had to share about this new collection of cover songs and her upcoming tour:

“Throughout my career, I have always enjoyed covering songs that I love, that I felt like I could relate to my life and sing in my own voice with respect and reverence to the original.

Every few years, I’ve put together a collection of cover songs that speak my current emotional language. We all go through phases and stages, and music is such a gift for processing life events!

The ‘Promises’ EP started with a love of the Alphaville song ‘Forever Young.’ As I have aged, changed and grown, grieved, and celebrated, that song has moved me so deeply with its humanity, on many occasions! Feeling its soaring notes in my chest, as I sing it, is healing.

As life was taking shape and I got engaged and am now married, working on songs that held promise became a theme.

I thought about the promise that I was making to my husband to stand by him, and sang ‘I’ll Stand by You’ to him at our wedding. And my niece performed ‘Forever Young’ during my father and I’s dance together at the reception. She brought the house down!

In an election year, I thought about

the promise that a country once held in Simon & Garfunkel’s classic ‘America.’

With ‘Just Make it Stop,’ for me, it felt like a promise to myself to keep believing in the fight that goes on! In goodness and outrage!

‘Everywhere,’ well, I promise to never stop loving and covering Fleetwood Mac. Haha.

‘Eternal Flame’ is the standout track originally written and performed by the Bangles years ago. My version was recorded YEARS ago with the Travelling Band in Norway and unearthed during this process, so I was happy for it to see the light!

I hope that you all enjoy my take on these meaningful and precious songs! Finally, I look forward to playing in Woodstock with all the history, and for my love of the music. Hope to see your readers at the concert! Great musicians changed the world there years ago!”

\*\*\*You can check her out performing at Woodstock this November 22nd, at the BEARSVILLE THEATRE!

## LED ZEPPELIN REISSUE GEM and SOLO PROJECTS

**Led Zeppelin: “Physical Graffiti” (50th Anniversary Deluxe Edition 180-gram 3-LP)**

Jimmy Page began the initial work at his home studio in Plumpton, Sussex, England, in the summer and autumn of 1973, with the first recording sessions taking place that October at Headley Grange, using Ronnie Lane’s Mobile Studio. Further sessions at Headley continued in January 1974. Additional overdubs were recorded at Olympic Studios, where Page completed mixing of the album in July 1974. Just released is the deluxe 50th anniversary vinyl

edition of “Physical Graffiti.” The deluxe version with that third disc of rough mixes, early versions, and other alternate versions returns to print in a beautiful gatefold package and now with an added replica “Physical Graffiti” promotional poster. (Atlantic)

Led Zeppelin singer extraordinaire, Robert Plant, announced the release of “Saving Grace,” the first album featuring the Rock & Roll Hall of Famer’s new band of distinguished players, which he recently referred to as “a song book for the lost and found.” With a release date of September 26 on Nonesuch Records, the genesis of this album began during a lockdown spent in “The Shire,” when Plant’s customary wandering was all but forbidden. While his recent adventures have centered around Nashville, having reunited with Alison Krauss for 2021’s chart-topping, multi-Grammy-nominated “Raise The Roof” LP, it was in the English countryside that Robert Plant connected closely to this diverse group of musicians, who, through their own experiences, had a shared leaning towards his much-loved corners of evocative song. Together, Plant, vocalist Suzi Dian, drummer Oli Jefferson, guitarist Tony Kelsey, banjo and string player Matt Worley, and cellist Barney Morse-Brown -- have spent the past six years growing a wide-ranging workshop of styles and personalities, weaving through time and circumstance with joy and abandon. “Saving Grace” breathes fresh life into a collection of centuries-old music as well as more recent treasures by Memphis Minnie, Bob Mosley (Moby Grape), Blind Willie Johnson, The Low Anthem, Martha Scanlan, Sarah Siskind, and

Mimi Parker and Alan Sparhawk's Low. (NONESUCH)

**Jimmy Page and the Black Crows: "Live At The Greek" (limited six vinyl LP collection)**

The Black Crows were nominated for induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame this year! Now releasing the Greek Theater (LA) performance of Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin) playing with the Black Crows from Summer 1999. Unlike previous versions, this is the FULL show, including over 15 unreleased tracks, and all the Black Crows tunes that have never been released until now! This is quickly turning into a major collector's item! (BLACK CROW PARTNER label)

**Peter Murphy: "Silver Shade" (Metropolis)**

This is an amazing album. Each song is fresh, inspired, and intimate. There are lyrical and musical nods to Murphy's classic albums from the '80s

and '90s ("Love Hysteria," "Deep," "Holy Smoke," and "Cascade"), as well as bits that let some Bauhaus influence enter the mix. Favorites include "Sherpa," "Silver Shade," "Cochita Is Lame," "The Artroom Wonder," "Meaning Of My Life," "Time Waits," and "Sailmaker's Charm." A must-have for fans of Bauhaus and Love and Rockets. It is also great for new listeners who are unfamiliar with Mr. Murphy. The album is probably the most impressive alternative rock iteration by a classic artist released thus far in 2025. High drama, exhilarating writing, and distinctive and savvy instrumentation married to complex singing arrangements make this a must-have. I guarantee that "Silver Shade" towers above whatever you have lurking around your turntable right now. Guest contributions by Trent Reznor and Boy George (bonus track). FIVE STARS.

Till next time ...

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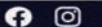


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# Gary Aldrich

BY LIAM SWEENEY

**G**ary Aldrich is a tattoo artist and owner of Dark Tower Tattoo in Troy.

**RRX:** So you're doing something at the shop around now, and into the holiday season.

**GA:** I put a post out, and I collect hats, hand warmers, sweaters, blankets - anything that I can to drop off at the Albany Mission.

**RRX:** How big are the hauls usually? How long do you do it?

**GA:** Last year, I was able to get eight boxes full of stuff up to Albany Mission. The year before that, I think it was about five, and then the year before that. It's just mostly personal donations on my part, which it still is. I try to get as many people as I can to come down and donate, and I picked this time of year because right before Thanksgiving, people tend to be the most giving, and the temperature's dropping.

**RRX:** So, how did you start doing this? Is this something you've just always done? Was there, like, something that kind of motivated this?

**GA:** When it comes to the homeless or Wounded Warrior, which is another one that I financially donate to ... the homeless is a soft spot for me because I was homeless three times in my life. I came from homelessness. So anytime I see homeless people, I do whatever I can now that I'm in a better position in life. I feel like it's important to give back.

**RRX:** So the Albany Mission, that's the Capital City Rescue Mission?

**GA:** Yeah, that's where I've been taking it. But this year, my sister's now the director of Joseph's House in Troy, and I'm gonna work in conjunction with her to try to get more stuff and try to make it even bigger than years past.

**RRX:** As far as the things that you look for, what do people bring the most?

**GA:** What do they bring in the most? Those little cheap - you see them at CVS and Walgreens - those little little rolled up blankets that cost five or ten bucks. Oh yeah, a lot of hand warmers, and I get a lot of socks.

**RRX:** What would you want people to know about homelessness that they don't really think about that might change their mind about this or that?

**GA:** The fact that there is more of it than they're willing to acknowledge. I think the general public views homeless people as disgusting vermin that need to be taken care of, instead of human beings that need help. And that's just the animalistic nature of humanity. We view these people as vermin that need to be cleaned up off the streets, or this or that. And it's like, "No man, maybe

they just need somebody to give them a hot cup of coffee and a blanket and tell them it's gonna be f\*\*\*ing OK," you know?

**RRX:** You said you want to do something bigger. What are you looking at? What are you thinking?

**GA:** I'm just trying to get as much stuff and donations as humanly possible so that I can get it down to Saint Joseph's because my sister recently became the director of the one in Troy. And I didn't even know that. She reached out to me, too, on top of you guys, and was like, "Hey, whatever you're doing, I'd love to help, and I can collect it and make sure that it gets more evenly distributed amongst the people that need it the most, versus just dumping it at a shelter and blah blah blah." So I'm gonna try to do my best to

ramp up as much on collections as I can, and if it doesn't turn out good, I'm gonna go down and spend a couple grand of my own and just buy it myself.

**RRX:** Alright, so let's say someone has a hundred dollars and they'd wanna buy only one thing to put in your bin. What would you ask them to put in there?

**GA:** They usually tell people to avoid large items. I would say just use that hundred to buy socks. Socks are the things that the homeless need, and the cold and the winter ones are needed the most.

**RRX:** OK, that makes sense.

**GA:** Yeah. It's a simple thing that people just don't think about, and your foot health is a major part of being homeless and your survivability. Thank you.

**RRX:** Let me give you a chance to say whatever you want in conclusion.

**GA:** I think that maybe as a community, locally, we could all come together and instead of viewing the homeless people as (like I said before) pests that are annoying and traffic at red light stops, we view them as people that just need help. And so just try to have more compassion in our hearts for all people. That's really cool. I should say one more thing to say a little bit about the shop, Dark Tower. I'm a tattoo artist. I've been doing it for 20 plus years. I'm in business on Hoosick Street. I'm extremely happy. I have a fun staff going right now. I got Gina Carbone (piercer), Skylar Cook (artist), Dorian Sav (artist), and my apprentice, Kim Cipriani. We're just rocking and rolling.





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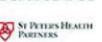
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