Xperience

RADIORADIOX.COM
LISTEN ONLINE

February 2026
Vol. 8, Issue 2

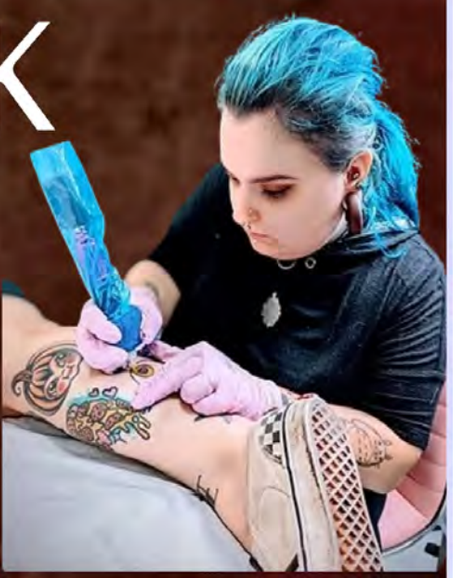
FREE

Bill Ketzer · VinTri Hill · Listen Up Origin · Vethaken
Rob Skane · Chris Busone · Alice B. Sullivan
Julie Brown · Fränder · Prog Digest

SKYLER COOK

Walk-Ins Welcome

Dark Tower Tattoo



darktowertattoo.com

564 Hoosick Street Troy, NY

(518) 203-7730

@NECROGLITTER.TATTOOS

Sebastian Bach. Photo provided.

Sebastian Bach

A new album for the former Skid Row frontman has him on the road and sharp. By Jason Irwin

Sebastian Bach remains one of hard rock's most distinctive voices, decades after first breaking through with Skid Row. With a new solo album, "Child Within the Man," and an active touring schedule, Bach continues to push forward rather than look back. He is set to perform on March 24, 2026, at Empire Live in Albany. I spoke with him recently about the new record, touring, collaborations, and the experiences that have shaped his career. This was an enjoyable interview. He is extremely talented, sharp, personable, and laid-back (but note: he doesn't take any crap, either). I like him.

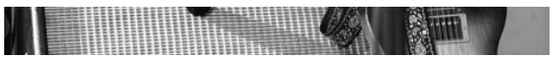
Here are what I consider to be the best parts of my interview. Enjoy!

RRX: So I was just listening to your song "What Do I Got to Lose?" I saw the video, too. It was pretty awesome. So, for your latest album, "Child Within the Man" ... how did this particular songwriting period compare to your earlier work?

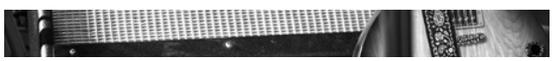
Sebastian Bach: There's no difference between the way I felt when I recorded "Youth Gone Wild" and "What Do I Got to Lose?" It's the same feeling. It's the same energy and excitement and the same love for it. I've always made music for myself. I'm not one of these guys who will tell you, "I'm the songwriter, so I have to write all the songs." I don't understand that way of thinking. I always just go for the best ideas. And if I don't feel a song in my heart, I can't sing it with conviction. I can't even sing it, actually. I've tried that before. I remember in Skid Row once or twice, they would write a tune that I didn't like, and I would think, well, I need to be part of the team, and I'd walk up to the mic and try to sing it, and my mouth would shut. I literally have to love the song for me to step up to the mic and sing it. That's not to say I love every song I ever did. But at the time that I am recording it, if I don't love it, I can't do it. I don't think that's selfish. I don't sit there and say, "What does everybody want me to do?" I make music that I love, and I always have and I always will. What you're going to get with me for the rest of my life is what you've always got. The same deal.

RRX: Awesome to hear. My next question is a tiny bit cliché, but I think it's important. How much would you

Continued on Page 5...



Art Fredette
Publisher, Editor-in-Chief
Liam Sweeny
Creative Director/Managing Editor
Michael Stampalia
Features Editor/Photo Editor
Rob Smittix
Program Director



Our Team

OP Callaghan
Joshua Scarselli
Peggy Smulsky
Stephanie J. Bartik
Timothy Reidy
Vito Ciccarelli
Nate Black
Rob Skane
BradQuan Copeland
Ed Conway
Tony Mastrianni
Jason Irwin
Sara Busone
Evan Lauber
Charla Earney
Chris Busone
Tim McDonough
Jim Barrett
Lori McKone
Christopher Ebbs
Justin Smulison
Sonny Speed
Neoptolemus
Sketchy Hubris

Xperience Monthly
70 Remsen Street
Cohoes, NY 12047
(518) 729-9060
radioxart@gmail.com

Published by Imperial Broadcasting in conjunction with Radioradiox.com.

Continued from Page 3.

say of the tour set list is focused on your latest music? And how do you balance that with fan favorite classics?

SB: Yeah, well, I think that the YouTube video plays tell me what people want to hear. The video you just mentioned has two million views, which in my day was double platinum. And, you know, I always do "18 And Life," "Youth Gone Wild," and "I Remember You" because I know people are buying tickets to hear those songs. But other than that — oh, and "Monkey Business" too. But other than that, I just play around, and I do what I feel makes a good show. And the cowbell has a lot to do with it. I love cowbell. I love the songs with cowbell in them, which are most of my songs.

RRX: The record features several collaborations with other artists, including Myles Kennedy, Orianthi, Steve Stevens, and John 5. Were there any partnerships on this record that were especially meaningful?

SB: Well, I think the one with Orianthi was pretty meaningful. My wife, Suzanne, hooked us up, and I love the song that we did. And then we did the video with Orianthi in it, and my daughter. She was like 16 filming this video. And so that has a heavy meaning to me. And Orianthi is a great guitar player. And John 5, I've collaborated with on all my solo albums. I've been working with him for over 10 ... maybe 15 years now. So that's amazing. And we're both KISS fanatics. So we really bond on that.

RRX: So, speaking of collaborations, you've done a bunch over the years. What's an awesome memory of either being a part of a supergroup or an onstage appearance that you really, really, really loved?

SB: On stage? Well, I mean, many times with Axl and Guns N' Roses when they reunited with Duff and Slash. They played at T-Mobile Arena here in Vegas, and they invited me up to sing with them, which was incredible. I have got to say the Taylor Hawkins tribute concert, where I played with Lars on drums, Geezer Butler on bass, and Dave Grohl on guitar. I mean, for a guy like me, from Skid Row, that was really, really mind-blowing. I couldn't believe I was up there with those guys, if you want to know the truth. Yeah.

RRX: But you are one of those guys, though ...

SB: Well, I didn't realize I was, really, because, you know, all these stories, "grunge killed hair metal," and all those clichés. But if grunge was out to kill hair metal, Dave Grohl wouldn't ask me to jam with him on stage, would he? So it's all a bunch of bulls*** at the end of the day.

RRX: You've taken on some really outside-of-the-box projects like Broadway, TV, reality shows, acting, etc. Which of those experiences did you enjoy the most?

SB: The one I enjoyed the most was definitely "Jekyll & Hyde" on Broadway. I'm a Marvel Comics collector. And one of the comics I bought as a kid in 1976 was Marvel Classic Comics #1, which was Jekyll and Hyde. And so I felt like I was in a Marvel comic because I used to read that comic all the time. I really had a lot of fun doing that show. I got to beat up people on stage and throw fire bombs. And wear the coolest Victorian fitted clothes. It was probably the highlight of my career, I would say. When you are a headlining Broadway leading man, which I was, you get treated in New York City like royalty. People in Times Square, in the Broadway Theater District, when

Continued on Pg. 40...


Vintri Hill. Photo provided.

VinTri Hill Thanks for Asking

By Liam Sweeny

Vincenzo Baldwin-Guitar and Vocals, Dimitri Cerrone-Drums, Tyler Munson-Bass

RRX: What would you like fans to know before they come to see you play? (No basic stuff; get specific.)

(Tyler) They are in store for a unique and highly energetic set-every time we take the floor. Whether it's a small crowd, or a ton of people, we are consistent, and every note hit, and movement, is going to be emotionally charged in a way not many other groups can really match. We each have our own little antics we pull during the show, whether it's Vincenzo's high jumps, or taking a random break during a song and going into the crowd to visit, or Dimitri drumming with a blindfold on, or even getting up from his kit to come watch me run a bass solo. Most shows you will see me shirtless by the end, and hanging off the edge of the stage playing upside down!!!

RRX: "The best laid plans of mice and men..." I don't really know the quote, but I know this one; sh*t happens. When we least expect it, calamity befalls us. Sometimes just comic inconvenience. Please tell us a story about some comic inconvenience that happened to you whilst performing?

(Dimitri) So we did an outside summer show up at Silver Factory, and the weather outlook initially wasn't bad. But, the second we started, like the first note we played, the rain drops started falling. It was a great memory for us because it shows a lot about our adversity. It rained for an hour straight, and we played as long as we could-everyone was absolutely soaked and stomping around in the rain. Vin was in the crowd shirtless, and we were not stopping, we just beat the piss out of our shit! It was funny to be defiant and overcome the weather.

RRX: How does practice go? Is the road practice enough, or do you have a practice shack? If so, how does it look? What's on the walls? What cool sh*t is in there?

(Vincenzo) Dimitri and Tyler come over to my place, where we have a practice space in the basement. It is quite the fun set up, we have a plexi drum shield and foam pads on the walls and corners to contain the sound-that being said, all volumes at 11 and no earplugs allowed. Aside from the guitar racks, amps and gear, we have some band posters from our favorite records, a few keep-sake show posters from some memorable shows we've done (FC Inc., Kool Keith, The Fleshtones). We have stage style curtains that close and block off the band space from a lounge area-there we have a futon, tv, games, a couple diy end tables, and a fake window-which has an inspirational poster in it of one of our favorite local bands-looking in on us. It helps us not feel agoraphobic.

RRX: We have to play somewhere, and sometimes those places have more going for them than a stage and a power outlet. What is a memorable place you played, and bonus points if it's not a well-known place.

(Tyler) I definitely have to talk about a place we hit on our mini-tour down South in October. There's this sick DIY venue in Richmond, Virginia called 'The Kitchen,' and the people that run it are so cool. It's in this backyard of a house in this awesome college neighborhood, simple, but with great aura-carpets for the stage area, lights running along the porch and stair rails, and hand painted sheets that block off the yard from the alleyway. It draws a wide variety of genres and groups that perform in front of young and energetic crowds. The night we played, we were with three bands from the area, Mega Fauna, Gap Tooth, and Squish, and they were all so welcoming and amazing, but that crowd, mixed with a little wind and rain whipping up from the incoming hurricane.....it was absolutely off the charts, high energy, and good times!!

RRX: Tell me about your most recent song, album, or video (you pick.) Tell me a story about what went into making it. Not a process, but a cool story that took place within the process.

(Dimitri) We made our music video for 'Without Me' in the basement of a local college. Now don't get me wrong, we are so appreciative that they let us use the space, however, it was like a fucking oven. So, it's like forty-five degrees outside, and a hundred and ten in this room. Now, this might not be considered cool, but we learned we were right next to the boiler room, and there was this neat pathway that leads from the room we were in, to the boiler area-it had this wild underground tunnel vibe to it-brick and dirt, random supplies along the way. Back to being cool, the room we filmed in was so hot, we all had this gloss on us from our sweat, and it made the video look sick-we were shining!

RRX: We let it out differently when we play music. The happy, sad, good and back; it can all be put out musically. Overall, do you feel better when you sing about the better times, or the worser times? Is there a difference you can describe?

(Vincenzo) Overall, I feel better when I sing about the worser times, because it lets me get things off my chest. When I'm happy, I don't feel as much of a need to write about it or sing about it, that's why it feels good to sing about general discontent, or things I'm stewing on, because I feel like I'm venting or doing something about it, in a creative way. I've written a handful of songs regarding happy topics too, there is a circumstance and emotion behind each song that helps fuel it as we are playing it. It's fitting, us being a Punk Rock band, we aren't singing about unicorns and rainbows.

Bill Ketzer

Capital Region Timekeepers

by OP Callaghan


Bill Ketzer. Photo provided.

This month, we're focusing on a veteran of the local music scene, Mr. Bill Ketzer! He's a drummer, singer, guitar player, historian, and has the absolute best "You didn't get the gig" story that I have ever heard. So let's give it up for Bill Ketzer!

RRX: You've had quite a history! I've seen you play with at least four bands. For those who don't know, talk about your playing history.

BK: Wow, hard to list them all, but the first gigging/recording band I joined was Vigilance in the late 1980s. I still see Jeff Nusbaum from that outfit here and there. It was the first band that really gave me chops, because we rehearsed for like four hours and had a million songs.

Then I hooked up with Duane Beer when he was forming Plaid, and we took off for a while. It was the dawn of alternative music, and punk was a resurgent part of that. Still a guy I look up to. So prolific, never boring, and one of the only people I know who never really has a bad word to say about anyone. All energy. It was incredible to play with him again in Blasé Debris – 25 years later!

I did Can't Say for about five years behind the kit, which started out as a fill-in gig, but you know how that goes. They were a signed band, so they toured a lot. That gave me a real education in what works and what doesn't, and how management, promoters, studio, A & R departments, and the industry generally functioned at the time.

In that era, we also had Thee Heinous Brothers, which boasted a combined total weight of like 1,800 lbs. Big Al was in the mix there, and we made a pretty hilarious LP called "Thugs and Kisses," which Chrome Peeler Records still has available for free on their website. It was a full costume, full mayonnaise affair. It was a bad idea to get too close to the stage. If you leap on stage in NYC, with a crowd full of jaded Manhattanites, with overwhelming volume, dressed up like Cookie Monster, and the whole place takes five giant steps backward ... that's real power.

After that, I went back to school and got a four-year degree, started working full-time. That became the era of the weekend warrior cover bands, which made way more money than any of the bands I just mentioned combined! Second Hand Smoke, the Lab Rats, tons of fill-ins with wedding bands ... I even got to do stints in North Again and Howe Glassman's Coal Palace Kings, which also included Mike Eck at the time. It was awesome, but I couldn't travel. I regret not sticking that gig out.

I played in Ten Year Vamp, an absolutely killer heavy pop band, for about three years. I did fill-ins when their full-time drummer (Greg Nash) was unavailable, but they kept me on as a utility guy. Keys, percussion, backing vocals, that sort of thing. I learned so much from them, including how to play to a live click track for the first time in my life. Best sideman gig ever. They treated me so well, and they were amazing songwriters. I wish they were still around!

Then it was Blasé Debris until I just couldn't make it work anymore. Today, I do the SOCOL Coalition with a bunch of my old high school buds, mainly for fun and a positive way, I think, to remember all of the bandmates we've lost over the past decade.

RRX: Tell us a gig horror story.

BK: It's 1994, and I'm in rough shape. Living a real destructive and pretty much transient lifestyle. By that time, I've been in Can't Say for a few years, we're signed to Moon Ska, and they're sending us on little guerrilla-style tours throughout New England that summer. I get out of work that day, and my roommates, who were night shifters, are passing around an old bottle of White Horse scotch. Suddenly, it's two hours later, the U-Haul pulls up, and I load my gear, feeling like Alexander the Great about to conquer Asia Minor. We drive two hours to the first gig on the tour in Hartford, and to my horror, I discover that my entire hardware case is still at home, drinking with my roommates. So for the entire stretch I had to beg other drummers for their hardware – all of it – to mount hi-hats, cymbals, my snare ... I didn't even have a throne. As you can guess, results varied. Some nights I sat on a folding chair, or a few anvil cases. It was a truly miserable summer.

RRX: We've lost quite a few local musicians, many of whom you've shared the stage with, or nearly shared,

lol. Tell us the Henry McFerran story! And a Big Al story!

BK: Well, my favorite McFerran story has to be my ill-fated audition for China White sometime in 1984. In my mind, I was the obvious choice for the drum throne because all the other obvious choices were already working, and I handled the audition pretty well, even though I missed a few downbeats here and there. But I couldn't really tell you whether that was the truth, or whether I was actually on a slow train to Siberia and was just having a pleasant, if awkward, fever dream.

What I DO remember, however, was Henry telling me that I didn't get the gig. I went down to Adirondack Strings at the agreed-upon time, and he just smiled at me warmly, almost sympathetically, put his hand on my shoulder, and said, "Listen man, we can't have you as our drummer. You're a good drummer, but you don't really live anywhere, you don't have a phone number, you don't have a job, and you don't have a car! I mean, how the hell is THAT going to work?" And then, as if he didn't expect it to be as funny as it sounded when he put it out there, his eyes got wide as if pleasantly surprised, and he laughed: "HAHAHAHAHAAAA!" And sure, he was totally laughing straight at me – looked me right in the eyes and howled – but the way he did it ... it made me laugh too. I recognized it as empathy, as compassion. And it was a wakeup call. I learned how to make and keep commitments (sometimes). I got a job and a car. I even got a phone number!

When it comes to Albie ... man. Just in general, he forced me so far outside my comfort zone musically that I sometimes wanted to jump out of my skin. We manly-men don't like to talk about making music in these terms, but you do it with certain people for 35 years, and it is a very intimate thing. It's telepathy, it's symbiotic, but it's also physical. You know them at a level that transcends thinking, beyond friendship. You don't have to look at them even once on stage, and it's tight as a tick, even if you haven't seen each other in a few years. You're the same tributary carrying that creation to the open water.

Honestly, my favorite experiences with Al came after Can't Say, when I somehow found myself "singing" in the Lab Rats, a metal cover band with Greg Nash on drums and my lifelong friend Joe Pallone on bass. We were like the four chambers of Frankenstein's heart. We never rehearsed, just relied on our collective musical canon. One night, we'd decide to play sides 1 and 2 of "Kiss Alive!" all the way through, because we could. We believed we could, and we did. I could play that entire LP in my sleep by the time I was 14, and couldn't do it wrong if I was in a coma. Same for them. And everyone just got it. It packed the clubs for a long time.

Then, in the blink of an eye, all three of them were gone. In the course of a little more than one year. I still haven't figured out what I'm supposed to do with all this silence now.

RRX: Every one of them is missed. What do you do for fun when you're not drumming?

BK: I'm a big history nerd, so I spend a lot of time researching and writing about local history topics. I'm on the board of trustees at Bethlehem Historical Association, and I am lucky to also serve as Bethlehem's official town historian. We launched an oral history program in 2024, and it's been such an honor to preserve the memories and experiences of our oldest generations, to see the world through their eyes. Being a parent to teenagers also takes up a lot of my time, but I love it even though it's the hardest job I've ever had!

Thanks to Bill Ketzter, a wonderful guy and tremendous player.


SATURDAY FEBRUARY 21ST
CRISIS ISOLATION GIG
LEAKING HEAD
ROCHESTER NY
HARDCOREPUNK
CHEAP HEAT
SCHENECTADY NY
HARDCOREPUNK
DEAD OF WINTER
HCPUNK MATINEE
CORRUPT WORLD
BURLINGTON VT
HARDCOREPUNK
HOLYOKE MA
HARDCOREPUNK
A PORTION OF SHOW PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT:
518 CRSC
-RAPID RESPONSE-
CAPITAL REGION SANCTUARY COALITION
LOCAL ICE ALERTS & MUTUAL AID FOR INMIGRANTS
ALL -AGES
10$ WITH DONATED ITEMS
CANNED GOODS
DRY FOODS
PERSONAL CARE ITEMS
15$ WITHOUT
DOORS AT 2PM
SHOW AT 3PM
SON OF EGG
483 BROADWAY
RENSSELAER))) NY
across Hudson River from downtown Albany


The Erotics
Saturday Feb. 21
STREAM OR BUY THE NEW ALBUM
Just What The Devil Ordered
30th Anniversary w/BLACK CAT ELLIOT • 3DB • ALL SORTS
EMPIRE UNDERGROUND
IN THE ALLEY BEHIND – 93 No. PEARL STREET, ALBANY, NY
$15 PRE-SALE TICKETS / $20 AT THE DOOR / 6PM DOORS / 6:30PM SHOW / 16+
CACOPHONE RECORDS


Lunasa
MARCH 1, 3PM
TROY SAVINGS BANK MUSIC HALL
UPCOMING SHOWS
The Knights
FEBRUARY 7, 7:30PM
LIFT SERIES
The Millhouse Rounders
FEBRUARY 18, 6PM
Rocky Mountain High Experience
FEBRUARY 28, 3PM
Mnozil Brass
MARCH 5, 7:30PM
Lyle Lovett & John Hiatt
MARCH 11, 7:30PM
Red Hot Chili Pipers
MARCH 18, 7:30PM
Direct From Sweden
MARCH 20, 7:30PM
Gaelic Storm
MARCH 21, 7:30PM
The Ten Tenors
MARCH 24, 7:30PM
32 Second Street Troy NY 12180
Box Office: 518-273-0038 TROYMUSICHALL.ORG
TROY SAVINGS BANK MUSIC HALL 1875

Music Notes The Art and Science of Music

By Peak Music Studios

Let me say something that might sound counterintuitive at first. Most musicians do not struggle with speed because they lack talent. They struggle because they chase speed before they build musical capability.

Somewhere along the way, we absorbed the idea that the fastest player must be the best musician. That if you can shred, you have somehow arrived. History and science tell a very different story.

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the fastest guitarist ever recorded is John Taylor. There are dozens of others who claim they have beaten that record. And yet almost no one knows who they are or cares. Why? Because listeners are not waiting for speed. They are waiting for music.

That is why Eddie Van Halen would not come close to the world's top ten fastest players, and neither would Yngwie Malmsteen. Both changed music permanently, not because they were the fastest, but because they brought phrasing, tone, and musical identity. Eddie Van Halen once said, "I'm not a speed freak. I play what I feel." Yngwie Malmsteen put it this way, "Technique is there to serve expression, not the other way around."

That does not mean speed does not matter. Speed is critical, just not for ego reasons.

It does not matter how many chords you know if you cannot change between them fast enough to play the song. It does not matter how many scales you have memorized if you cannot execute them at a reasonable tempo. And it does not matter how many licks you can almost play at performance speed. What matters is what you can actually play. Here is where science helps clarify things, and this applies to guitar, piano, violin, voice, brass, woodwinds, percussion, all of it.

Speed is not strength. It is not effort. It is not forcing your hands to move faster. Speed is a nervous system skill. It is about how efficiently your brain sends signals down nerve fibers to activate and release muscles with precise timing. Whether you are picking strings, striking keys, bowing a violin, or coordinating breath and tongue, the limiter is the same: neural efficiency.

Motor learning research shows that sustainable speed gains are gradual, typically two to five percent per month for experienced musicians, and only occur when precision stays high and tension stays low. This is why speed plateaus feel universal across instruments. The bottleneck is not your fingers. It is the nervous system deciding whether it trusts the signal.

This is also why boredom turns out to be a secret weapon. When students tell me they are bored playing scales, pentatonic, diatonic, harmonic minor, modal patterns, I usually smile. Boredom strips away distraction. When nothing is entertaining you, your attention shifts to finger release, key depth, bow pressure, timing, and relaxation. That is where speed actually lives.

Short, precise blocked practice, two to three minutes on a single meaningful pattern, allows the nervous system to remove inefficiencies. Done consistently, this produces verifiable speed increases over time. Not dramatic or flashy, but real. And it works whether you are practicing Hanon on piano, Kreutzer on violin, articulation patterns on trumpet, or alternate picking on guitar.

So if you want speed that actually shows up in music, focus on the right metrics.

Precision instead of effort

Short, focused speed sessions

A proper warmup to set the nervous system

A cooldown to lock in what matters

Speed is not something you chase. Speed is something that appears when your nervous system trusts the signal. Do not focus on speed alone. Focus on musical capability across your range, and let speed rise to support it. That is how technique becomes useful, music stays joyful, and how speed finally feels effortless.

This Month in Music History, February

February 3, 1959. A plane crash kills Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and The Big Bopper. A moment sometimes marked as The Day the Music Died.

February 4, 1977. Fleetwood Mac releases "Rumours," one of the best-selling albums of all time.

February 9, 1964. The Beatles appear on The Ed Sullivan Show, a milestone that any rock fan can appreciate.

February 11, 1963. The Beatles record their debut album, "Please Please Me," in a single marathon studio session.

February 14, 1970. Black Sabbath releases "Black Sabbath," a nod towards dark themes in music, and a solidification of heavy metal in American music.

February 22, 1811. Composer and virtuoso pianist Franz Liszt is born, later redefining solo performance, technical virtuosity, and the concept of the modern concert pianist. Yes, you can shred a piano.

February 25, 1969. Jimi Hendrix records material with the Band of Gypsys lineup, a milestone in music fusion from the rock scene.

Weird Music Fact, February

February 7, 1964 – When the Beatles arrived at JFK Airport for their first U.S. visit, the screaming from fans was so loud that reporters noted the band could barely hear questions or each other. The noise level was estimated to rival jet engines on the tarmac, forcing the group to rely on lip reading and body language during interviews. This problem would follow them onto the stage. The Beatles were not drowned out by bad sound systems. They were being drowned out by their own fans. A problem for sure, but a problem that many in the music performance industry would like to have.

Tim Livingston. Photo by Kim Livingston

Tim Livingston

Singer of the legendary area band The Morons rehashes a memorable scene. **By Liam Sweeny**

I spoke with Tim Livingston, frontman of punk bands The Morons and The Last Conspirators. Gracious and easygoing, he brings me along on his walk down Albany Punk Memory Lane.

RRX: Let's talk about the Morons if we could. 1979, 1980 - I was tripping over my blankie, 3 to 4-years-old, you know, so not too much before my time, but a little bit before my time. What was it like when you guys started out? What was the scene like? How did you guys end up getting together?

TL: I've been a rock fan my whole life, and I was coming from the school of, like, Bowie, Alice Cooper, glam, and things like that; into the Stones and just everything. It's the '70s, and we're in school, and it's pretty mainstream. We were in East Greenbush, Columbia High School, the four original members of the band. We went to a party one night, and all the usual stuff was being played: Boston, Styx, Kansas. I was after the glam stuff I got into. Our bass player, JB Homicide, was into similar music, like Elvis Costello and all the new wave stuff. But punk came kind of late to Albany. It wasn't '77, '76.

I had an older brother in New York, and he was turning me on to, like, Patti Smith albums and stuff. So jump ahead to some time in the fall of '79, we go to a party, and there's a band playing there. They're in the basement, the instruments set up, and they're playing Rush and all kinds of stuff like that, which is all good. I'm not knocking it. But it wasn't what I was into at the time. During their break, Jeff and I, JB Homicide, jumped up, grabbed their instruments, and started improvising some punk rock stuff. The first thing I did was grab a roll of tin foil off of a banquet table and started ripping it up ... Jeff was just like, "da da da da," and I was like, "I chew on tin foil all the time," and I wrote the song "Chewing on Tin Foil" on the spot. We made a mess of a couple other things and then quit after that. People started asking, "Hey, when you guys playing again?" And we just came up with the Morons.

We ended up getting another guy on guitar, a friend of ours in school, our buddy; we were all buddies, we all hung out together. We got offered a New Year's Eve gig at a party with two other bands, just local Rensselaer County bands playing cover stuff. We got together with a drummer, and we did like five songs. I think I fell over and knocked the drum set over at the end. And all crazy, but it just sort of added to the hype.

So when I say '79 to 1982, we played New Year's Eve of '79, so we were basically in a 1980s band. Then ... Jim Furlong (who you may know, owns Last Vestige), he was in a band - the ADs - at the time. We were going around town because I always like to hype stuff, and I'm saying, "Yeah, we're the Morons. We're a punk band," and, you know, all this stuff. And he calls me up like a few weeks later and says he's putting together a showcase of original music bands at JB Scott's on a Tuesday night or something, and it was his band, Real Danger out of Albany, another band out

of Delmar, and us. I said, "OK, absolutely, yeah." We wanted to play JB Scott's because at the time, it was the happening national tour act place. But we weren't really ready for it, so we basically wrote songs and started practicing, and it was really my first gig outside of some basements in Schodack ... and we went from there. We did that show, and we ended up opening up for the Stranglers, the Cramps, the Motels, and playing every oddball place you could imagine in Albany. There was a lot of these downtown bars, like the Town Tavern, Chateau Lounge, 288 Lark. They were like basically old men day drinking bars, and guys like Furlong went in and us and Real Danger. "Hey, can we play here? We'll play for the door. You have nobody here." And that's kind of how that whole scene started, and we played everywhere and anywhere we could.

RRX: 288 Lark, JB Scott's, like all these places that were around back then, these iconic places, that aren't around anymore - what do you think as far as the difference between those days and now? Are you keeping your eyes on the music scene in this area now?

TL: I watch it. I dabble. I live in Florida now. I've been down here for 10 years. I still have obviously all kinds of friends up there, and I keep an eye on it ... with Facebook and stuff. I think maybe the foremost thing is that the drinking age was 18. And there was a lot more live music in the area, both cover bands and the original stuff. It just wasn't techno and DJ style culture, which is more prominent today, I believe, with the young kids. It sort of just exploded, and it's just a time and a place. 1980 - all these bands are popping up from every suburb and also the city of Albany, and we just started playing, doing original music, and having a real fun time at it.

I think it was more of a live music culture back then to begin with, a lot of opportunities to play places, and nobody made any money other than the cover bands. I think a case of Miller was our rider. That's what we played for a lot of times.

RRX: The Last Conspirators. I'm trying to figure out how that connects to the Morons.

TL: The Last Conspirators was my band for a 10-year run. I was in the Morons, like I said, '82. The Morons never really broke up. Guys went to college. I stopped booking gigs, and we remained friends all these years and never played again. Our last couple shows - one at 288 Lark, and one at Chateau in 1982, March of '82 - would have been the end of that anyway. I did an album 11 years later; I kept writing songs, and I did an album under the name of Ghost Runner.

"Beneath the Apocalyptic Rain," which was me taking myself as far away from the Morons as I could. It wasn't tongue-in-cheek, bratty, fun punk. It was dark rock, and I think it was kind of intentional. I did four or maybe five gigs at Bogart's, which was Bogie's later on and might even have been Bogie's then. This is '93 ... I did one at QE2, and then I left. I just didn't do that anymore.

Kept writing songs. 13 years later, I put together (in my mind) this band, The Last Conspirators. I have a whole batch of songs, I have an album. ...Talked to my longtime friend Al Kash, drummer. He climbed on board and wanted to play drums on it. I got a couple other guys involved and recorded the first album. It was gonna be one album, I thought, one album and a show, and that was at Savannah's, the album release show. And this would have taken us up to 2016. So we did the show, and it went really well, and the guys were into it, were into playing. I kept writing. We just started doing shows, and I kept that together for 10 years.

Listen Up Origin Story

By Rob Smittix

What must've been like six years ago, Art Fredette, Kit Haynes, and I (Rob Smittix) attended a hall of fame induction award show. We went to show our support for all the well-deserved inductees. Unfortunately, the show itself was a snooze fest; it literally was a struggle to keep my eyes open. The atmosphere was stuffy, and all of the fun that could've been had was sucked into the vacuum of pretentiousness.

As soon as we exited the hall, it really was a breath of fresh air. The three of us carpooled, so on the way home, we all discussed how we felt about the award ceremony. We all felt the same, that it was not lively enough. You could hear a pin drop in that room. This isn't a knock on the efforts of this hall of fame, but rather an observation of the experience of those who paid to be there.

It all started as a joke. Kit made the comment that we should start our own award show and call it "The Arties" (referring to Art Fredette). We laughed, but Art replied no, I'm not that egotistical. I chimed in that we should give out old bowling trophies and have an award show that doesn't take itself so seriously. Art said we should have funny awards like "Most Likely to Fall Off Stage" and "Most Likely to Owe the Club Money." The conversation continued for the remainder of our ride home, unaware that we'd actually make this a reality at that point.

Fast forward just a few months, and we had conversations with Frankie Cavone of Mirth Films about this silly idea of ours, and it was at that moment that we decided to team up and make it happen.

Originally, we wanted the Listen Up Awards to be held at different venues every year. Our first award show was held at Lark Hall in 2022. The next year, we brought Listen Up to the Cohoes Music Hall, and the third year, the awards were held at Putnam Place in Saratoga Springs. During this time, RadioRadioX and Xperience Monthly had relocated our studios to Cohoes, a block away from the Cohoes Music Hall, so going forward, it only made sense to bring the awards back to Cohoes, and the music hall has now become our official venue.

The Listen Up Awards - photo by Stephanie J Bartik

Did we accomplish what we were looking to achieve? Absolutely! The vibe of the Listen Up Awards over the last four years has never been humdrum. I am one of the hosts, and none of us behind that podium takes ourselves too seriously. We joke, we bust chops, we laugh, we drink beer, and we hand out plaques. We don't even wear ties; we wear band T-shirts and leather jackets, and we encourage you to do the same. We don't compare ourselves to the Grammys; we'd rather be the local Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards.

What is also unique about Listen Up is that we do not have a panel of judges; this is strictly people's choice, your vote, your choice. This means that even when an artist wins that maybe isn't our favorite, they still win because they got the votes. As a matter of fact, we've tied our own hands because we don't allow ourselves to vote or even nominate anyone for any category. The only people we get to choose are those we induct into each year's Hero Class.

The Hero Class Awards are given out each year to people who we feel not only made a huge impact on our local music scene, but also to those who have helped others along the way. Because 2026 is our 5-year anniversary, we made it a huge two-day event (Feb 21-22), with the first day being "Hero Day," as we will be giving out 21 Hero Awards. This year's hero class includes: Tess Collins, Daley Brothers Band, Stigmata, Section 8, Deb Cavanaugh, Joe Mele, Eddie Angel, The Deadbeats, Kevin McKrell, Jim Furlong, Vito Ciccarelli, George Guarino, Peter Iselin, DJ Young Wise, Blotto, Scotty Mac, Ernie Williams & The Wildcats, Alex Torres, 1313 Mockingbird Lane, Tom Flynn, and Matt Hatfield & Tom Murphy of Parkway Music.

The second day will be the actual 2026 award ceremony. Notice that our awards say "favorite" and not "best," and the reason for that is simple: you got enough votes to be the favorite for the year. If we used the verbiage best, we'd be leaning into pretentious waters ourselves, and that's not who we are. Another cool fact about our awards is that the same artist can not win the same category two years in a row, although they are eligible for other categories if they fit into them.

The Listen Up Awards also have live music, and the performers can only be winners from the previous year. This year's performers are: Day One: Kristian Montgomery, Off The Record, and the Albany Rock Pit. Day Two: Brother T & The Boys, Ginger Geezus, Chris Sanders & The Better Days, and Luke McNamee.

In previous years, I myself witnessed a couple of crybabies when they did not win an award. Remember, don't take this too seriously and work harder next year. There is no reason to get upset, be thankful that you were at least nominated, and be happy for your peers. Even if you are not a nominee for an award, if you are a music artist, it is highly encouraged that you come to the award show. This is the greatest opportunity of the year for you to network with other musicians from the area. Meet bands and people that you may have heard of but never had a face to put with the name, set up gigs together, and help strengthen our music community.

The 2026 Raven Events Listen Up Awards

The Cohoes Music Hall

Saturday, February 21st (Hero Day) Doors at 2pm Show at 3pm

Sunday, February 22nd (Award Ceremony) Doors at 2pm Show at 3pm

For tickets, visit: thecohoesmusichall.org (Enter the code LISTENUP at checkout for a 2-day discount.)

The Heights

A celebration of the life of pianist Lee Shaw

By Joe Barna

It was the summer of 1999. My friend Andrea and I were traveling north on the Taconic Parkway in my forest green 1996 Ford Mustang enroute to spend time with her mother and younger brother. I had only known Andrea a few weeks, but we connected on many levels, including musically. She was a cellist at SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Music, and I was just beginning my journey as a jazz studies major. She and I were engaged in a conversation when my phone began ringing. Being a responsible driver, I asked Andrea to see who was calling me. This would be one of the calls that would forever alter the course of my career.

Let's get into something ...

Knowing I could not leave this call unanswered, I immediately pulled onto the grassy side of the parkway and picked up the phone.

Me: "Hello Lee, how are you?"

Lee: "I'm doing well, Joe. How are you?"

Me: "I'm great. Traveling with my friend Andrea on our way to spend time with her family."

In true Lee Shaw fashion, she responded, "Well, that sounds lovely on a beautiful day like today. I hope you both enjoy yourselves."

Now, I still didn't know the reason for the call, so I simply asked Lee what I could do for her. She explained that she had a performance coming up at Justin's on Lark Street in Albany and did not yet have a drummer. Knowing I was currently studying at Purchase, she asked if I would like to join Rich Syracuse and herself for the evening. In a moment of sheer excitement, I responded, "OF COURSE I WOULD." This was the first time a musician of her stature had ever asked ME to play with THEM. It's the type of call we as young artists dream of one day receiving. An opportunity to share the bandstand, in a sideman role, with someone we love, respect, and aim to become. I was both excited and joyfully scared to be a part of Lee's historical career. It's a moment that will remain in my heart for eternity.

So, why am I expounding upon this topic??????

Lee Shaw was an absolute treasure. Not just here in New York State's Capital Region, but across the country and abroad. She was a pianist, composer, educator, friend, mentor, and humanitarian who touched the lives of thousands throughout her 89 incredible years navigating her way through this mortal realm. Londa Lee Moore (Lee Shaw) was not just a musician; she was an inspiration. Someone you aspired to one day become, although you could never. A petite and humble lady raised in Ada, Oklahoma, Lee would devote her entire life to bringing music into the lives of people thirsting for someone or something to uplift them, releasing them (if only temporarily) from their struggles, trials, and hardships. She composed songs that brought smiles to those fortunate enough to hear them. The way she carried herself was nothing short of exquisite. Lee had an elegance and softness that calmed even the most untamable of beasts. She led every step with passion, conviction, humility, confidence, and tenderness.

I was fortunate to have had the privilege of calling Lee a friend. She mentored me musically, but also took time to reach out when time allowed. She'd ask questions like "Joe, how are you feeling today?" or "What have you been listening to lately?" or "Have you composed any new songs recently?" Lee cared about those she loved and made the effort to let them know she was curious about them. Even with her busy schedule, she would often take the time to go out and listen to others whenever possible. Lee never put herself above anyone, nor did she utter a negative word

Scan to donate to Joe Barna's fundraiser

regarding another individual's playing or persona. She was first class through and through. In the words of saxophone great Ralph Lalama, "She's #1 in my book."

Lee Shaw passed away on October 25, 2015, in Troy, NY. In her passing, she left behind a legacy most would salivate over. Her thousands of performances, album releases, guest appearances, compositions, and kind soul touched the lives of many. Her students went on to accomplish great heights of their own, including Theo Hill, John Medeski, Nick Hetko, David Gleason, and too many others to list. They took the lessons Lee emboldened them with and carved their signatures into this artform known as jazz. Her impact continues to be felt through the stories, teachings, and performances of those who were affected by her.

On Sunday, March 1, I will present a concert honoring the woman who gave me my first big chance as a sideman. This year's WINTER JAZZ FEST at Alias Coffee will be a celebration of the life and contributions of pianist Lee Shaw. This concert will be completely free to all who wish to attend. We are able to do this in partnership with Capital District Jazz and Keith Pray. The organization has agreed to allow me the good fortune to fundraise through their 501(c)(3) nonprofit, using both individual and corporate sponsorships. We know some of you out there do not have the $45 to attend a show of this magnitude, so we have decided to raise the money for you. It's our way of saying we love and appreciate each of you who wish to be there.

Along with Capital District Jazz, I would like to send out a heartfelt THANK YOU to Art Fredette and his entire crew at XperienceMonthly/RadioRadioX for getting behind this project and encouraging those in their circle to do the same. You have been a force on the area's performing arts scene for years, affording opportunities to hundreds of artists from in and around the region. You're another treasure in our community that deserves far wider recognition, and I love you all.

Special thanks to StudioBlue (led by Chris Alsdorf and Jay Mosier) featuring Peg Delaney & Jeanine Ouderkirk, Dave Solazzo Trio, and my band Sketches Of Influence for bringing your talents to the stage for this joyful encounter. It's going to be a memorable gathering for all involved.

Thank you, Bill Stern, for videotaping; Hernan Lopez for opening up your space; Chris Alsdorf for constructing the new stage; John Chiara for running sound; Bill McCann for being the master of ceremonies; and Chris Garabedian for being a rock in my life who goes way beyond the call of duty in encouraging me to be a better man.

Thank you to my daughter Savina Jewel for inspiring me every day to be a better father, human, and lover of God. You give my life purpose and fulfillment. I Love You.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to the great Lee Shaw for bestowing your wisdom, music, and integrity on all who knew you. You're a force of nature who shone down on so many, breathing life into a community who loved you … We miss you.

What to expect on Sunday, March 1, at Alias Coffee in Troy, NY …

~ Free Admission
~ Catered Dinner & Dessert
~ 3 Bands Beginning at 4pm
~ Cash Bar (beer, wine, and craft coffees)

If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation to help ensure the overwhelming success of this special concert, please go to cdjazz.org and click the link for Lee Shaw Tribute.

If you wish to make a cash donation, you may do so the night of the event or email Joebarnamusic@gmail.com

Thank You
Warmest Regards,
Joe

Raven EVENTS

Your Vote, Your Choice
2026 LISTEN UP AWARDS

MIRTH FILMS

RADIORADIOX.COM XPERIENCE MONTHLY

ALBANY ROCK PIT

CALLANAN est. 1883 INDUSTRIES, INC. A CRH COMPANY

Day 1 (Hero Day)

Saturday February 21st

Doors: 2pm
Show:

COHOES MUSIC HALL
MANAGED BY PLAYHOUSE STAGE COMPANY

FOR TICKETS VISIT:
THECOHOESMUSICHALL.ORG

58 REMSEN ST.
COHOES, NY

Please Welcome The 2026 Hero Class

TESS COLLINS, DALEY BROTHERS BAND, STIGMATA
SECTION 8, DEB CAVANAUGH, JOE MELE, EDDIE ANGEL
THE DEADBEATS, KEVIN MCKRELL, JIM FURLONG
VITO CICCARELLI, GEORGE GUARINO, PETER ISELIN
DJ YOUNG WISE, BLOTTO, SCOTTY MAC
ERNIE WILLIAMS & THE WILDCATS, ALEX TORRES
1313 MOCKINGBIRD LANE, TOM FLYNN
MATT HATFIELD & TOM MURPHY (PARKWAY MUSIC)

Performances By:

Premium MORTGAGE CORPORATION JEFF DORRANCE

THATCHER ST PUB

Dark Tower Tattoo

400 RIVER

CALLANAN est. 1883 INDUSTRIES, INC. A CRH COMPANY

Raven EVENTS

Collar City Painting, LLC

CORCORAN'S TOWPATH TAVERN

PEAK MUSIC

LOST & FOUND

JJ's CYCLE

ALBANY ROCK PIT

Raven
EVENTS
Your Vote, Your Choice
2026
LISTEN UP
AWARDS
MIRTH FILMS
RADIORADIOX.COM
XPERIENCE MONTHLY
ALBANY ROCK
PIT
CALLANAN est. 1883
INDUSTRIES, INC.
A CRH COMPANY
Day 2 (Award Ceremony)
Sunday February 22nd
Doors: 2pm
Show:
Performances By:
BROTHER T AND THE BOYS
GINGER GEEZUS
CHRIS SANDERS
& THE BETTER DAYS
LUKE MCNAMEE
Premium
MORTGAGE CORPORATION
JEFF DORRANCE
THATCHER
ST PUB
Dark Tower
Tattoo
400
RIVER
CALLANAN est. 1883
INDUSTRIES, INC.
A CRH COMPANY
Raven
EVENTS
Collar City Painting, LLC
CORCORAN'S
TOWPATH TAVERN
PEAK
MUSIC
LOST &
FOUND
JJ's CYCLE
ALBANY ROCK
PIT

3 Questions with Bill Frisell

By Rob Skane

You must listen to Bill Frisell play the guitar - I mean it. Pick any of his records, he's been making them since 1983, and listen. Because when you do, you'll find that few people play with more emotion, creativity, and depth.

His most recent album, "In My Dreams," will be released on February 27, 2026. That evening, Bill will be performing at the Bearsville Theater, along with Larry Campbell. You should go - I mean it.

Please visit billfrisell.com or bluenote.com to learn more.

RRX: What was the moment that made you pick up a guitar and never put it down?

BF: For as long as I can remember, I've been in love with the guitar. At first, maybe it was simply the object itself. I just thought it looked cool. Like a hot rod or a rocket ship. And cowboys played them. That was cool, too. But then. The way a guitar can bring folks together. Let's start a band! Let's LISTEN to each other. I fell in love with the SOUND. I fell in love with the MUSIC. Harmony. The guitar is a magic wand. A key. A key to unlock our imaginations.

RRX: If you could go back and tell your younger self one thing about playing guitar, what would you say?

BF: I guess I would tell my younger self to not worry. Don't be afraid. Don't try to be hip or cool. Don't worry about what you think other people might be thinking. Always trust the music. The music has the answer. The music will tell you what to do next. Music will never let you down. Music is good.

RRX: When you're not onstage or recording, what kind of stuff do you play when no one's listening?

BF: Whether I'm alone, when no one is listening, or when I'm recording, or in front of people, nothing really changes. I just play. One thing leads to another. One note leads to the next. Music is good.

Art for Art's Sake

"Slow Stories" - A brilliant new multimedia "art bundle" from Bette A and Brian Eno. **By Tony Mastrianni**

The phrase "Art For Art's Sake" is a slogan that expresses the independence of art from social values and utilitarian functions. Critics explore (or abhor) the arguments, examples, and criticisms of this aesthetic work in literature, music, and visual arts. Herein is a great new special edition bundle (limited to only of 444 copies) containing a hardcover book of Bette's A.'s "Slow Stories," a vinyl record with the recording of two stories from the book read by the author and set to Brian Eno's music (only available as part of the bundle), and a 20×20 cm unique and numbered hand-painted panel, signed by both artists. This presentation renders each individual copy a one-of-a-kind collector's edition available now for preorder. Both the bundle and the book separately will be released on March 3, 2026, exclusively available from Unnamed Press. The bundle will sell out quickly. It will only exceed its value on the secondary market if you are fortunate enough to buy one. Not inexpensive, but a rare collectible package indeed!

Brian Eno's compositions create an aesthetically appealing ambient sound, underlining Bette A.'s voice as she tells two of the stories in the collection, "The Endless House" and "The Other Village." The simple, calming pace of the story is a deliberate choice, according to the author, who says, "When a story is told slowly, every sentence becomes more vital." Usually when we hear stories read, we expect the pace of the reading to be even," added Brian Eno, whose only instruction to Bette as she recorded her short stories was: "Slow, slower, even slower, yes, more slow." Eno explained, "What we discovered when we were making these stories is that leaving longer spaces gives your mind a chance to imagine the detail that is hinted at in the story. The music creates a suggestive atmosphere that supports you in doing that. You do not want a lot of action in the music: what you want is to create an evocative space that leaves you, the listener, in a creative frame of mind." Eno's music is sonic bliss. It is quite euphonious—even sublime. Aesthetically appeasing and never vacuous or insipid (this is not elevator music)! It subtly grasps you and immerses you with a sense of tranquility.

Bette added, "When everything is fast, fragmented, and designed to grasp your attention, attuning to one very slow story can be a radical act. This record is a guided daydream, a space for rest and imagination." "My stories take place in strange and imaginary towns and villages from pasts that never happened and futures that will never occur," explains Bette. "These worlds exist without an elaborate background description, like islands in a misty sea."

For both artists, slowness functions not only as a stylistic decision but as an act of resistance. Giving 30 minutes of your attention to something that is not urgent, not loud, and not passive is rare. Putting on a record is a physical gesture to enter that mode, engage with art, and, maybe, your inner world. Immersive and unique!

The hand-painted artworks accompanying the "Slow Stories" art bundle extend this collaboration into a shared visual world. The paintings by Bette and Brian depict immersive, dreamlike terrains - birch forests with graffiti, lunar mountain ranges, floating eggs, and geometric color fields. Like the stories, the paintings leave room for the viewer to enter and make the work their own.

The artist's proceeds of the sale of the bundle will go to their charities: The Heroines! Movement, a global storytelling movement around women role models, co-founded by Bette, and Earth Percent, a charity that channels funds from the music industry to organizations that do the most impactful work around the climate emergency, co-founded by Brian.

How We Get To Next, CC BY 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>, via Wikimedia Commons

Vethaken

Their sound is one-of-a-kind. Just like the community that grows around them. By Liam Sweeny

Pravin Thompson is a unique performer, and his music, Vethaken, defies labels and his fans define community, Vethaken is a scene worth checking out.

RRX: You've more or less dared people to put Vethaken into a genre, because it's not happening. When I listen in, I struggle too. And it's the real deal. It's its own sound, it's not just some retread of someone else's thing. Is there effort in sounding unique, or is it more effort to just fall into a genre?

PT: It's kind of hard to answer that and not sound pompous. I'm gonna try. The way I write, it's not like I have much intentionality behind it, like, "Oh, I haven't heard this done before, let me do it." A lot of it, I'm just trying to, like, see where the song or the riff or the composition goes naturally. I'm not trying to control it very much. I listen to a lot of types of music, and I'm a big jazz dude, I'm a big post-hardcore, emo guy. I also love Tool, Porcupine Tree, and all these prog rock bands. When I was super young and developing and most malleable as a kid, I was just like, "So the three cornerstones were metal and emo, prog rock, and jazz." So I think everything I do inevitably falls somewhere in the middle between those three worlds.

RRX: This question is really about the individuality in your sound. I mean, it's good and it grooves, but then there's a risk, isn't there? I mean, you're putting yourself out there viscerally. If someone doesn't like your sound, it's not because they prefer techno to blues. It's more a direct hit because it's that unique. How do you deal with that?

PT: I was lucky to have parents who don't like anything that I do. That might sound insane. I love my mom, but when it comes to music, she's such a church lady, and that's all she listens to. No one has been more like, "I don't like this," than my mom. I haven't seen a single internet comment that has hurt more than my own mother. So a lot of it is just that. If you go through the comment sections on a lot of those videos, like, the people who are trying to hurt me are usually very metalhead dudes who are like, "your guitar sound isn't clean" or yada yada yada, and I'm like, "whatever, I don't really care about that," but no one, no one, no one hates it more than my mom, so it's just like what can you do or say? You can't do anything; I feel quite invincible with that.

RRX: That's a pretty good point. Yeah,

PT: My dad likes my music, though, so like it balances out.

RRX: You got one person in the family. That's cool.

Creating music (or anything); it doesn't require an audience, but an audience adds to it, even from the beginning. When you look at your audiences, who are we seeing, and are there any audience members you think you wanna give, like, a quick 15 minutes to?

PT: Oh my gosh. I would say the audience has become, in the last two years, especially, so important. I've been working on music since I was 13, and I've been working on this project for 10 years, and the first, like, five or six years were just, "I hope people like this." You're just kind of

doing it, and you know, the way I write, I don't wanna control it. So much of it is just, like I really hope this resonates with people deeply, and not just like "Oh that's impressive guitar stuff' or 'What a cool solo.' We have a Discord server for fans, and it's so awesome to talk to people, and it's so funny because a lot of my fans remind me of my friend group from high school. I feel like this music and the branding and everything about this project is a tribute to this found family mentality that I had growing up. It's funny, I see a lot of late millennials my age who were going to Warped Tour and going to Bamboozle and all these metal festivals. I see a lot of - and this is a huge honor - a lot of queer and LGBTQIA+ community people. I'm part of that community too.

I see a lot of people who represent parts of me that I was so scared of as a high schooler. I see this music and this world turn into a safe haven that didn't quite exist for me when I was a young kid, and it's cool. I would say most of my fans are in their mid-twenties to my age or older, and there's definitely a lot of people who are older and coming out of the Grateful Dead world, which is cool. I don't relate to that as much, but I love seeing it. I love that that's a part of my world. There are so many fans I have that I can't wait to hang out with, especially because we're starting a tour.

RRX: Your discography belongs in an art gallery. Amazing work on all your albums. What goes into deciding on a cover? Is it a process or is it something more like a lightning flash?

PT: It's definitely a process. I've been working with this incredible, incredible artist, Anita Inverarity. She's Scottish, she's awesome. I never know if I'm saying her last name right. I hired her, and she's so collaborative and so fun and awesome to work with. But a majority of our artwork is done by Celeste Silva. She's a friend of mine I met in Montreal years ago, and she's one of my best friends over the last nine, ten years. And it's funny, it's fun to see her art style evolve with us over the last ten years. She designed my website ten years ago, and she helped me figure out all the branding. But it's always been a process, and it's always been interesting because I'm not a visual artist, so it's a lot of me literally sending her poems and descriptions and thoughts. I'll send her a mood board and the artwork for the new EP, "I'm All Out of Beautiful Thoughts," - that probably took three to five months. It took a long time … there's a lot of things going on with me. There's a lot of things going on with Celeste. She feels like a secret band member cause the artwork is important. I love good artwork. So it definitely is a process.

RRX: What are you working on right now? Are you in the studio or are you on tour?

PT: I have 10 new songs that I wrote in 2023. I'm … in the process of arranging them and slowly dripping them to the band, and we're gonna record. We're gonna record a full-length in the fall, late summer or fall; that's definitely happening. I feel like this record is the first like full-length since "A Thoughtful Collapse," so that was what, five years ago? I feel like this is a new milestone. I've been teasing a new direction. And this is, like, a more solidified … this is our sound, this is who we are. And I'm very excited about it for a lot of reasons. It's a very emotional album. "A Thoughtful Collapse"; I love that record. What that record means to me is my identity crisis in New York, and it's me trying to really figure things out. Figure out where I stand and what I like. I needed to write this record because I was just not in a good place emotionally, and the only way to get through was writing this album. So this feels like more of, like, this had to be written in order for me to be who I am.

You Can't Go Back

By Rob Skane

Listen to me for once. Life is a spiraling force moving through the universe, unencumbered by modular time concepts. I know this because I'm smart. I even went to community college, but there was confusion about something called a grade point average? I don't know ... Nonetheless, our rocknroll universe always follows the Arrow of Time, which means we move from order to disorder. Think of it like this – a guitar string can break, but it can't un-break, you dig? Maybe I'm getting a little Ram Dass over here, but when I say "Be Here Now," I'm not referring to my least favorite Oasis LP.

God save the dream, we mean it man. Many of us wanted to be in a rocknroll band so badly that we let our boundaries, if we even knew what they were, be totally eroded. It happens, and there's no shame there. Ricky Nelson let us know that it's all right now, we learned our lesson well. He knew rocknroll bands are far from a Garden Party. We could have listened, but why would we? Experience is often the best teacher anyway. The School of Hard Knocks, the Boulevard of broken amps. If you know, you know. If you don't, you're about to find out.

I quote from the Book of Seger when I say, "I wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then." Unless you get in with the right group of people, people with the same vision, people who you can hang with, people who have your back – unless that happens, your hopes of making cool music are often doomed. It's happened to a lot of us. We get mixed up with toxic bandmates who were never really in our corner, although they did attempt to portray that grand illusion. You put up with it because you're hoping they'll go back to being the cool breeze guy they were when the band started. It never happens because they stay toxic forever.

Haven't we all played music with a few people that, over time, we've grown to despise? Sometimes we put up with so much - literally suffering for the music, for opportunity just to play - that when we're finally done, we are done. The rocknroll troll pretending to be your pal secretly fries your amp, and you're stuck at a gig with a blown speaker. Let's check that one off the list, kids – been there. This one time (not at band camp), someone gave away my PA system without asking. Several months later, they justified it by telling me they knew I wouldn't have minded. We all have those stories, and I'm sure that we're all grateful that we've never engaged in that kind of behavior.

Being in a band can be like dating four people at once, the rocknroll version of ethical non-monogamy, I suppose. It's safe to assume that there are times when you don't share the bond with some people that you think you do. And that speaks more to their level of character than it does to yours. You were probably used as a tool so they could play gigs and get their rocks off. A lot of us just wanted to write songs and be in a band with people who were into the tunes. Sometimes we're fools too long, and we have it figured out all wrong.

You might have gone back a time or two because you wanted to believe that people can change. I did too. Different people, different projects – always the same result: it got weird, and I split. It starts out with visions of sugar plums, but it never works in the long term. I've actually experienced it getting worse the second or third time around. Understand this: when people devalue you, it's because they know they are the ones with no value. Yet, they always try to come back around, often smelling like smoke from the bridges they've burned. Banking on your ability to forgive and forget, all the while remembering how they carved you up when they thought you didn't know - they'll whisper sweet nothings into your one good ear, hoping to get back into your good graces.

Promise me, but more importantly, promise yourself that you won't fall for it. When it happens - and it will - walk and don't look back. Moving forward feels great, because ... well, you know. Feed your head, write your songs, find your people, and rock on. You can do great things, my babies!! And you will. I assure you. Now, go ... while you can.

Photo by Shutterstock.

...2..3..4 Memoirs of the Broke and Fameless

By Chris Busone

In its infancy, Rock & Roll was looked upon as a pox to the health and well-being of young people from sea to shining sea, when the seas actually shone and weren't littered with the scattered remains of fishing boats. Its trance-inducing rhythms were meant to twist young minds into thoughts of growing their hair to unreasonable lengths, dancing with unbridled exuberance, turning on-tuning in, and defying their parents to the point that they contributed nothing to society or their 401(k)s. And God bless it; it did just that back then.

But as is the case with many things that start off innocent and pure, popularity and the promise of big money and dizzying fame can turn them into a big crap-flavored popsicle. But fear not, there's still hard rockin', honest, grab-you-by-the-privates, Rock & Roll out there if you look for it. So let's look.

From the time Bill Haley and his Comets first rocked their way around the clock, and Elvis dippity-do'd his first pompadour, Rock & Roll has been moving minds and soothing souls with its driving beats and lyrics of angst and ecstasy alike. It was born of the blues, of that there can be no denying. In 1951, long before Haley and Presley, Jackie Brenston and his Delta Cats cut "Rocket 88" at Sam Phillips' joint, and it is widely thought of as the first time Rock & Roll was committed to wax. That track swings like I-dunno-what, and along with Eddie Cochran's "Twenty Flight Rock" is credited as among the first songs Lennon and McCartney played together. So cool, off to a great start. But where are we today?

The Rock & Roll of the masses has lost that "living on the edge/nose permanently thumbed at the establishment" persona which it acquired as a birthright. If Rock & Roll were a person, and it probably is, it would be Elvis Presley. He is the perfect example of what Rock & Roll was, and what it can become when it's not tended to properly. The Memphis wiggler scared the ever-lovin' sh!t out of every parent in America when he hit the scene, only to be singing watered-down Hollywood pap in a hideous Hawaiian shirt a few scant years later. And that transformation sort of encapsulates the corporate aspect of Rock & Roll for me. From fearless rebel to jabroni in a goofy tiki-top. And all due to the aforementioned big bad dollars and famously famous fame.

But before this fiery sermon makes you think me a hair-sprayed, sweating-through-my-overpriced-suit, say-anything-to-get-a-piece-of-your-pension-check-televangelist, extolling the evils of soulless rock, let me present the faithful flock with a couple more examples to make my case. Turn to Page 12 in your hymnals.

The biggest corporate shill in the history of gluttonous glut, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, is a running joke among those who have even a flicker of the fire left in them. Their inexcusable inclusions and exclusions are as legendarily hilarious as they are egregious. They refuse entrance to their sad little clubhouse to deserving artists of all genres of Rock & Roll. And why, you ask dear reader? Because the Hall wasn't created to honor those they love. It was created to exclude those they don't. Just like every other country club on the planet.

Take a second and let that sink in. I'll wait.

Their most obvious oversights include Motorhead, the New York Dolls, Alice in Chains, Blue Öyster Cult, Dio, and Thin Lizzy on the harder side, and the Smiths, the Cure, Joy

Division, and the Pixies on a more esoteric tip. And strangely, they offer no quarter to mainstream monsters like Huey Lewis and the News, Phil Collins, Stone Temple Pilots, Lenny Kravitz, Bryan Adams, and even the goddamn Carpenters. (And we've only just begun!) But they somehow saved a seat for balls-to-the-wall rockers like Whitney Houston, Donna Summer, and of course Dolly Parton (a lovely lady, but even she knew that was bullsh!t). But bigtime rock is not alone, my fellow worshippers, oh no.

Even rap, which was greeted with an even more caustic welcome than Rock & Roll when it emerged from the streets, has smoothed its edges in recent decades. Two of the most ferocious (and best) artists who led the way early on, Snoop Dogg and Ice-T, are now part of the mainstream zeitgeist for reasons other than their rhymes. Snoop is making butterscotch scones with Martha Stewart ("It's a Motherf—in' good thing!"), and Ice-T, who once had the entire country on edge when he released a tune called "Cop Killer," has been playing (you guessed it) a cop on primetime network TV for the last 34 years and wants to sell you an extended warranty for your car.

So, what's my point to all of this, if I even actually have one? It's this next bit. The answer to the question, "Is there anywhere to find real-deal Rock & Roll of any kind anymore?" And the answer is a resounding ... Hell Yes!

It's local. Stay with me, I'm going somewhere with this, not just pounding my fists on the bar in one of those petulant posts to shame people out to local gigs.

Local artists still have that hot white flame inside of them that sets fire to everything they touch. Because there is no famously famous famey fame and rivers of ridiculous riches in their world. They do what they do for the love of the art. They do it because they have no choice but to do it, because it's who they are, what they are, all that they are. The cliches about guitar players bringing $5,000 worth of gear and spending 20 bucks in gas to play a gig that pays $75 are funny, and absolutely f—ing true. It's worth all the time, effort, practice, money, sweat, stress, and strain to ply your skills in front of a crowd, no matter the size. When you see a local artist, you're looking at someone who is not in the least interested in the payday or payoff of their performance. Just art for art's sake.

Ya know what, screw it, let me officially climb up on my bully pulpit and preach.

Yes, my children, that is where the true spirit of Rock & Roll lives on these days. Can I get a witness! Let it be known throughout the congregation that it endures in the hearts, the souls, the gritted teeth, the sweat-ridden hair matted to the foreheads of the players and artists who are in the local venues around you. Praise be, Chuck Berry! They are gutting it out night after night after non-corporate night for nothing more than the pure pleasure of creating. Those one or two "Sounds great, man" that you get after a set, and the handful of people in the crowd who know the words to your song. That's our riches. That's our payday. And I'll take it all day long, every single time. Anytime and every time I get up on a local stage and count my way into another night of real-deal, from the Heart & Soul, Rock & Roll.

Here endeth the sermon, here endeth the lesson. Go in peace (to a local venue near you), 2...3...4

Alice B. Sullivan

There's more to a zombie apocalypse than shooting them in the head.

By Liam Sweeny

Death is not the answer. Not if you're smack dab in the middle of a zombie apocalypse. In this environment, death is not the answer; it's the admission ticket. Alice B. Sullivan brings zombies to life – or undeath – in the printed page. Her Aftermath series comes with a headshot.

RRX: Let's start by having you tell me a little bit about yourself first.

ABS: All right. Well, I have been writing since a young age. I think it was like sixth grade in English class when we started writing poems and short stories, and I absolutely fell in love with it. I started by writing poetry and really short stories. I doubt they were any good, but I was 12 years old. I was just having a lot of fun with it. But I grew up loving the horror genre in general. Playing video games (Resident Evil), watching my brother and my cousin play those video games. I consumed horror like it was water. And then I figured out, as I got older, that I could also write. The stories that I loved to consume - whether it was games, books, shows, or movies - I figured out that I could also write those stories. The zombie genre just had this immense chokehold on me from Resident Evil and George Romero. I just stuck with that genre, and I never looked back.

RRX: Your zombies, are they Romero zombies or are they Resident Evil zombies in terms of speed?

ABS: It depends on the series. I have eight books and a couple of short stories, and I have my main series. In my main series, I have more Romero-style zombies in the sense that they shamble. There's no residual intelligence there. (I know Romero dabbled in his intelligent zombies, which was super cool. I loved "Land of the Dead," "Diary of the Dead"; I loved it all.) They don't have the intelligence, but they shamble. They eat all sorts of flesh. I do also love running zombies cause I think they're terrific. It just depends on the type of zombies. So if it's an undead zombie, it's a shambler, but if it's like my "living infected," like "28 Days Later" or "Dawn of the Dead 2004," it's gonna be a runner.

RRX: How do you think it happens? In fiction, like if we were to really get zombies, what do you think would keep the undead alive enough to run? How do you think that would happen?

ABS: So, in terms of reality, I think it would be science gone wrong simply because humans always explore things a little bit too far. We think that we can do certain things in the name of science and discovery, but we never really know when to draw a line, and I think because of that, we always cross that line. I think it would be something bio-engineered in the sense that it would take hold of the important aspects of the body, so the brain stem, the major organs, but what makes you "you" is kind of gone. In that sense, you're undead. But the pathogen, whether it be a virus, bacteria, fungus, etc., takes hold of your nervous system and does all of your sort of functions for you, but what makes you you is completely gone.

RRX: When you're writing about zombies, obviously, there's metaphor and stuff like that. I look at it from two different kinds of perspectives. One was like the original "Night of the Living Dead." It was so much about the fear of the zombies. It wasn't trying to figure out the personalities of the people in the house. It's all about the fear, the isolation, you being trapped, and trying to figure out how to survive the night.

And then you have "Walking Dead," where it's almost like they're props. Because it's all about the character development of all these people, and the zombies are just something like window decoration, just a plot device at some point. How do you balance those two perspectives?

ABS: When I consume my zombie media - books, games, what have you - I do like a lovely balance of zombies being a threat on top of human relations. Because, of course, when the apocalypse happens, you're going to have that human drama, whether it be people going completely ballistic or you're trying to seek companionship and survival with other people. But when I write, I make sure that zombies are still sort of center stage. In the sense that if people become a little bit too docile to zombies, that's when you make that mistake, and a single mistake can cost you and other people their lives. So zombies are always a looming threat, whether it's 10 years in the apocalypse or five months since the apocalypse. But the way my characters deal with that is that they work as a team. They train every day with simulations and real-life scenarios so that they don't ever really become too docile to the threat. Because one zombie or a group of three zombies isn't that terrifying, especially if they're shamblers. But in a horde situation, you can get backed into a wall pretty damn easily. And regardless if they're walking, you can't really outrun that. You're gonna get backed into their corner.

So I do like that steady balance of human relations, them growing and still learning. Even if they've lived with the zombies - them growing and learning and meeting new people, and then humans coming in to sort of disrupt that a little bit and forcing the characters out of their comfort zone. So, placing the characters out of their comfort zone brings an added layer of drama regardless of them fighting the same types of zombies. It's still in a different environment, city, town, whatever. But I still think that adds that layer of drama of breaking the character out of their comfort zone.

RRX: I think you touched on something. Yes, the zombies are scary, but

after being in that world long enough, you kind of get used to them, and the living human beings end up being the bigger problem. Do you have any of that in your writing?

ABS: I do. In my main series (it's the Aftermath series), it's set 10 or 11 years post what I call the collapse, which is a zombie outbreak. My character focuses on the town that she has found refuge in, but then an outside force comes in, disrupts everything, forces her out of her comfort zone, and she realizes that the zombies aren't the only thing that she has to worry about. What disrupts her comfort zone is a higher evil, which is, you know, corruption. The origin of the outbreak itself, and people she thought she knew ending up being people she didn't know at all, because people are deceiving, they can betray you. So I do have people being an outside strong entity to disrupt the flow of a character's mundane, quaint life in the zombie apocalypse. So it's never cozy.

RRX: One of the things that's cool about the zombie genre is, as terrifying as that world is and the many dangers and threats that you have to navigate, there's a sense of freedom. Because, even though they're not deadly, think of all the things we have to navigate in our modern society that, when you're in a zombie apocalypse, those don't matter anymore. Nothing matters except survival. So in a way, there's a big freedom to it all. Do you see that?

ABS: Oh yeah, 100%. My friends have asked me, "Do you prefer a zombie apocalypse or a 9-to-5 job?" And I picked the zombie apocalypse every time. I know it's devastating. I'm not trying to take away from the devastating aspect of it or the death toll or anything like that. I know how heavy it is. Obviously ... all I write are zombie books, and I understand the weight of it all. But when you're put into that, it's like when life gives you lemons, you have to make something out of those lemons, right? You have to look at it a little differently. There is a sense of freedom. You're not waking up, having to worry about bills, taxes, anything like that. You're waking up, and you're kind of back to your roots of finding community, growing food, maintaining livestock, and sort of trading skills that are equal in value. To help each other out, rather than focusing on making money to afford something. Everyone's kind of working together to sustain some sort of community, and you have camaraderie, and you have things like that. So it brings us, in my opinion, back like people. Back to their roots, and you understand that yes, it's devastating, but at the same time, if you find a close-knit community, you can build something out of it. There's still some hope in that situation.

Sebastian Bach (cont.)

Continued from Page 5.

you walk into a restaurant or something, it's like, "Right this way, Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde." I remember I did an interview on NBC Channel 4, the biggest TV station in New York City, with Aisha Tyler, the biggest TV newscaster. I'll never forget — I'm sitting there on TV at 6 p.m., and they go, "All right, next up, we know him in New York City as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. But I bet you didn't know Sebastian Bach has a rock and roll past?" And I go, "What? That's the intro for my interview now? You didn't know I had a rock and roll past?" That was mind-blowing to me. When they cut to my face, I was in shock because I had done something in New York City that was bigger than Skid Row. And that just felt really good to me. I thought, Wow, I did something else in my life.

RRX: Anything else on the bucket list outside the box that you'd still like to tackle?

SB: Well, I would love to do more theater, but it really depends on the role. Because if you're doing something that many times a week, then you'd better love it. I would love to be in a Marvel movie at some point in my life. I'm a very big fan of Marvel. And I've done lots of acting. So that would be great. Those two things. Maybe a DC movie too. I'm not exclusive.

RRX: Now, without getting into "reunion" talk, which I'm sure you are asked about a lot: there's always a lot of, I guess, online stuff ... social media ... about you and your former band. How do you deal with all the social media noise about things like that?

SB: I don't even care about social media. I use it to promote my shows. It doesn't mean anything. It's like nothing. I promote my concerts and let fans know I have a new record out. It's been years since I bothered reading a comment section. I have better things to do with my time. Let me just say this: When the internet first came out, none of us knew what the hell it was. 10 or 15 years ago, yeah, I was reading comments and threatening people to fight down at Chick-fil-A at 4:30. Then I thought, why am I wasting my time? Nowadays, people are realizing that the really cool people are not on the internet. It's a place for jealous losers. Nobody really cool is typing s*** online. I've canceled all my social media accounts. I like looking at stuff like old videos of bands I love, like Rose Tattoo. I love all the KISS stuff — I'm a collector. But as far as reading what Jimmy from Iowa thinks of my new video, I don't give a f***.

RRX: That's excellent. Moving on — what do you do to keep your vocals sharp, especially after a long career and a pretty demanding tour schedule?

SB: When I was 18 or 19, I first joined Skid Row. Jon Bon Jovi put me with his vocal coach, Don Lawrence, in Manhattan. I used to take lessons from him for $100 an hour in 1987, which is like a grand an hour now or something. He made us record our lessons. So when digitizing audio became a thing in the mid-'90s, the first thing I digitized were all the vocal lessons I took at 19. Now, every time I sing — every show, every album, even jamming with another band — I put on a tape from one of those lessons and do my vocal exercises at 57 that I did at 18. I never let it go. I keep my voice the same as it was. I don't know anybody else who does that.

RRX: Well, it's paid off because you sound great.

SB: Thank you. I appreciate that.

RRX: I know you're a big KISS fan. I am too. Here's a debate: when it comes to the best KISS party song, most of my friends go with "Rock and Roll All Nite." My personal pick is "Shout It Out Loud." I think it's more all-encompassing. What's your take?

SB: I say "Shout It Out Loud." I'm on your side. I love "Shout It Out Loud." I remember when I was a kid in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, that song was a hit on my local radio station. They played it all the time. They also played "Christine Sixteen" and "Calling Dr. Love." Cheap Trick, too. I remember being in the kitchen, hearing "Shout It Out Loud" while my mom was making dinner, and just freaking out about how much I loved it. I love that song.

RRX: That's excellent. Thank you for backing me up! How about this: What gives you the absolute best feeling during a live show?

SB: Well, we're doing something new in the show that I don't want to give away — it's a little stunt that's fun. Other than that, I would say doing the song "What Do I Got to Lose?" When you put out a new song that has to stand next to classics like "Youth Gone Wild" and "Monkey Business," it better be good. If a new tune can be played next to those songs, that's an incredible feeling. That's my favorite part of the show.

RRX: I don't suppose you want to share a pet peeve as a performer.

SB: A pet peeve? Phones. That's easy.

RRX: Phones? Okay, that's a really good answer.

SB: It's a simple answer. We had a sold-out show the other night in Lincoln City, Oregon. This lady in the front row was filming me with her phone. I picked it up slowly while she was filming, and I put it down my throat for about 15 seconds. She got footage of my vocal cords. I said, "Here, here's the inside of my guts. Is this good enough? Put the f****** phone down." When I got home, my wife said, "Why are you putting people's phones in your mouth?" It's disgusting and dirty. I was just trying to get some good footage.

RRX: All right. I won't use my phone at your show. I'll get the word out.

SB: It's just endless.

RRX: Well, before we wrap up - and thank you so much again - is there anything you want to say ... anything on your mind? Something you want your fans to know?

SB: You guys are in Albany, New York, right? Okay. Well, Saturday night, we're playing in Atlantic City, New Jersey with Tesla. One of my favorite bands, great guys. That's at the Hard Rock Arena. And then the next day, January 25th, I have my third art show at the Hard Rock with Brian Wheat of Tesla. We're both going to be there at 2 PM. 2 PM, can you believe that? And we're going to be showing our art and having some fun. And that's something I really love to do. So Albany, if you want to – and I know Albany's pretty far, but it's not as far as Vegas. And I'm coming to you from Vegas. So if I'm coming from Vegas to you, maybe you can come to Atlantic City from Albany.

RRX: That's fair.

SB: Right?

Sebastian Bach online: sebastianbach.com

Empire Live for show info & tickets: empirelivealbany.com

Julie Brown What it means to be alive

By BradQuan Copeland

The depletion of cohesion beneath collapse's looming mass leaves an absence of faith, where ruptive passion takes shape. Immersed in the saturation of unceasing sighs, divinity dangles hope where fleeing life can't arise, until the relentless will to survive unearths the craft of what it means to be alive.

This verity unveiled itself through the soft-lit lumen of local painter Julie Brown, whose zeal drew my fascination into her hushed interior vastness. Having shared the turbulence of her twenties with me prior to our encounter, I knew I'd be welcomed into an unruffled refuge where abstraction could be explored to the liminal edge.

An embodiment of implosive magnetism highlights the material intelligence of a remarkable sequence of works that breathe beyond anatomy. The structural traces unravel a luminous compression accumulated through a seriousness void of pretension. Evoking responses that are experiential rather than explanatory, the tone remains controlled without muddying interpretation.

Her hunger for clarity, worn through disembodiment, depicts a metaphysical narrative encased in the airiness of dream logic. Imagine a rapture without climax, stretching sensation fine enough to linger. Unfastened, you're plunged into absorption as breath slows, memories awaken, harmony thickens, and time blanks on advancement.

A ripple that doesn't grant exhilaration, but permission into a sub-atomic dimension where hues press closer, and the body thrums like guitar strings stroked by the fingers of ancestors. It carries a faint ache braided through wisdom real enough to touch. Though present and slightly untethered, you wade through a state that can't be held, only tasted. Nearing culmination, you're comfortably exposed, bare to the marrow of the bone. Calm and glistening, you're cradled by an unsullied world that only gives and never takes.

Her work gets you high on a drug you can't buy, but can only experience through an unflinching dive into the jungle of life that turns the weak into monsters and the strong into sovereigns, not to rule over others, but to master oneself in a way that euthanizes the ego.

I suppose this all makes sense, given her venture into holistic health modalities such as acupuncture, sensory deprivation, salt caves, meditation, and sound healing back in 2019, which shifted the game for her from that of arena football to the national league. This, combined with picking back up the paintbrush, granted Julie a second coming, eventually landing her in tuning fork sound therapy in 2021, where she fused with her inner compass and, at last, found her life's vocation that had been obscured by familiarity for so damn long.

Now a certified sound healer, she's able to see her inner world in terms of frequency and vibration, transferring that ethereal surfacing through your chest, jaw, and stomach, resulting in a lightly disorienting containment rather than stimulation. It's the kind of wavy sh** that a nonreceptive person would equate to hocus pocus or voodoo, but I'm here to double down on the truth. She is the real f***ing deal. No games, no gimmicks. My brain left her naturally lit somatic sphere, serenaded by divine tranquility. And I'm saying this after a gracious sample tuning.

Julie is a being who thoroughly understands the power of art to transform and connect us all into a unified consciousness. An integral part of a shared collective of creatives within the Troy, NY area, she strides forth in the waking reality of imagining a new world.

Sitting down to speak with her, the oneiric trance became anchored in a discussion that unleashed the raw humanity of a pillar within the art community

RRX: When you look at your body of work as a whole, what part of yourself do you recognize that existed before diagnosis, language, or explanation?

JB: This sense of open playfulness. This open heart that always wanted to give everyone everything. That was always there. I feel like that energy is in my work. It's like an opening, like a portal. The intention behind every piece, without me even thinking about it, is how can I imbue this work with as much positive energy as possible so that anyone looking at it feels something. It's giving, but giving from a place of abundance, not lack. I understand that I'm abundant. I don't feel a sense of scarcity. That energy exchange feels sacred to me. Anyone experiencing my work feels like a gift to me, regardless of how they label it.

RRX: During the years when anxiety and panic dominated your inner life, how did your body communicate truths that your mind couldn't yet hear?

JB: I believe every form of sickness is your body trying to tell you something. I used to see myself as a victim, like why are these things happening to me? Why do I have anxiety? Why do I have depression? I used to say "I am depressed" as if it was my identity. Now I honor those signals. When my body stops me, whether it's anxiety or depression, I see it as information telling me something needs to shift. For me, frustration usually lives in my stomach. That's how I know something isn't flowing. When things are aligned, I feel satisfied. I ground myself, do acupressure, come back to truth with a capital T.

RRX: In these paintings, the forms feel gathered inward rather than released outward. What inner force is responsible for that gathering?

JB: Compassion. I don't think you can have anything without compassion for yourself. A lot of this work came from real self-love, not performative self-love, but truly accepting myself for who I am and loving myself unconditionally. That's been the only way forward.

RRX: When you returned to painting after years away, what aspect of yourself did the act of making restore that nothing else could?

JB: Hope. Excitement about life. Purpose. When I wasn't painting, I was in the darkest place of my life. I didn't believe happiness was possible. I remember saying to my therapist that I couldn't even imagine being happy for a minute, let alone a day. When I returned to painting in 2020 and made dozens and dozens of works, something shifted. Suddenly, happiness existed in my body again. Contentment existed. I had to build tolerance for joy because it felt unfamiliar. Painting gave me permission to believe in what was possible again.

RRX: Many of these surfaces feel layered with residue rather than gesture. What are these layers holding that couldn't be released all at once?

JB: I call it the veil. It's like peeling an

onion. You don't know how many layers there are when you start. We all have blind spots, things we don't see clearly because we're inside them. Once I felt empowered enough to stand on my own two feet, I wanted to peel those layers back. Trauma lives there. Ego lives there. Childhood conditioning lives there. Healing isn't comfortable. It doesn't end. You reprioritize everything when you strip things away. You can't hide or distract yourself anymore. You have to be with it. That's the work.

RRX: Light appears here as pressure rather than illumination. What does that kind of light reveal to you about healing?

JB: Light is infinitely more powerful than darkness. Darkness exists, but calling in light eradicates it completely. I work with 100% pure light. I call in guides, source energy. I don't see myself as the creator of the work. I'm a conduit. A channel. That's where the ego separates. I allow the light to move through me. We forget who we are as humans. We forget that we're light beings, connected to everything. Healing is remembering. We forget, then we remember. That's the test of being human.

RRX: When working with sound, frequency, or paint, how do you recognize the moment when an emotional release becomes a shift in consciousness?

JB: I feel it in my body. Tingling, waves, chills. I often feel the same emotion that's releasing from the other person because we're sharing the same frequency. After sound sessions, it's always a 180. People come in anxious or closed off and leave lighter. The frequencies integrate over days. With painting, it's similar. When you're creating, you're present. Something reorders itself internally. The process itself does the work. It's not about the final product or whether it sells. It's about what happens while you're there.

RRX: The repeated patterns in your work feel more like memory than ornament. What role does repetition play in your spiritual integration?

JB: Repetition is everything. Meditation is repetition. Journaling is repetition. Returning to the work again and again is how we integrate. These paintings are living meditative spaces. Repetition is how we reprogram ourselves. It's how we come home to ourselves.

RRX: As your practice has moved toward collective healing, how has your understanding of individuality changed?

JB: You lose individuality in the best way. You realize you're connected to everyone. Collective healing amplifies everything. We need each other. We're hardwired for connection. Purpose comes from service. When you step into that, individuality becomes something porous, something shared.

RRX: If these paintings were encountered long after your story was forgotten, what essence of your inner world do you believe would still be felt?

JB: Love. Wonder. Interconnectedness. Energy. Those things live in the work beyond me.

With nothing left to extract, no thesis to underline nor doctrine to convert, Julie Brown's work doesn't exist to be understood so much as it demands to be taken in, momentarily and sincerely, barefaced.

It resists flair and certitude, offering instead an expanse where focus unclenches, breath settles, and the ego dissipates. You don't leave altered in a way that demands explanation, but in a way the body carries forward.

What she leaves topples both inspiration and conclusion, replacing them with a heightened awareness that arrives unannounced. Rooted in the creative ecosystem of Troy, her practice unfolds in humble conversation with others equally invested in imagining what comes next. Nothing boisterous, but more profound. Within that shared labor, art shifts from self-revelation to connected sustenance, paving the way for something enduring to take shape.

Fränder

In Swedish, "Fränder" means "family." For the band, it means everything. By Liam Sweeny

Folk isn't solid. It's as fluid as the waves that carry tradition across oceans and seas, to take root on the shores of a faraway land and bloom with the colors of the national flag. We spoke with Gabbi Dluzewski of the Swedish heavy folk band "Frandr."

RRX: So I'm speaking with Gabbi Dluzewski of the Swedish band Frander, singer and Swedish Mandola player.
GD: Yes.

RRX: What does the word mean in Swedish.

GD: It's an old Viking word, it's not really used in Swedish common language anymore. And it means kindred and kin and friends and family, but also extended family. So I usually say that in one way, it's more than family because we are all friends. As long as we are not enemies, we are friends. So it's a very inclusive word. But still, it's not only being friends. It's like we have blood. We are human. We are human beings, and we are related. So that that is what it means. And it was a very used word because back in the days in Sweden, that was the word you used for allies and people you liked in general.

RRX: It's apt that you use that word for the band because you are siblings, right?

GD: We started out as a as a pure family band. My little sister was in the band, my older brother and my wife. Our little sister, she left, but the rest of us are still in the band. So yes, it's a family band.

RRX: Have you ever played with a band that wasn't your family? Have you ever played in another band with other people?

GD: Of course. There are other people in this band as well, but yes, I have, but me and my brother, we have played in the same bands for twenty five years. So he has always been there.

RRX: When you're growing up as siblings; I'm an only child, so I have no idea what it's like for siblings. But I can imagine you all endeavor to do something great together. Did that start early, or was that something you guys grew up and you just happened to find that you all liked the same thing?

GD: We all like the same thing, but I think it's a-, not a misunderstanding, but usually people think that because all siblings are playing music, that's what we do when we meet each other and we are just happy and we play tunes and we are having fun. That's not really the case with families playing music all the time. I think it can be very complicated to try to create music together. Speaking about music and doing music separately, that's fine. And it's a lot of fun, but it's not like we are having a big family band and it's like 'yeah, that's not working.' We have always liked the same things, we have liked music and we have liked the similar type of music. And we have all played with my brother. I think it's just started because I didn't have a bass player in my band, so my parents told him to step up his game and play the bass in the band. So he had to. And then he has continued doing it.

RRX: You play folk or do you call it something else? Am I right on that? Is that is that what you guys focus on? Folk music or is it something else?

It depends on who you ask and where you are in the world. I think in reviews we have heard people or seen people calling it heavy folk, which I like. I like that brand heavy folk. And that's something we have started using because people started calling us that.

GD: Here in Sweden, I think we are more like traditional. We end up in the genre of traditional Swedish music. We call it folk music over here. But folk music for you is Bob Dylan and Joan Baez and those people over here. Folk music is traditional music, and that's where we end up. But I think nowadays we are a folk rock band and we aren't very traditional anymore. I think that the genre lines, the borders are moving and we are moving.

RRX: From where you are folk means traditional. Is that like looking at Europe because you've toured Europe, you've toured the United States, you've toured everywhere. So touring Europe. You're talking about Bob Dylan and Joan Baez and we have a big folk audience, a big folk music scene here. But like thinking about it being different over there. How would you describe the overall scene, aside from just the music, the pure music itself, but the actual crowds of fans, is the scene different for Europe than America or are they very similar?

GD: No, I think every place is different. But I also think that even within a country, every place is different. So it's hard to say. Of course you have extremes. I mean, Japan, for example, is extremely different. So we did a big tour a couple of years ago. We did a world tour. We flew one circle around the world. We played forty shows in a row during two months. Then we started in Japan and played twelve shows in Japan. And of course, it was super beautiful. People were super kind we were very well treated and we loved it, but it was very, very different from what we were used to.

The even bigger difference was when we continued from Japan, we flew from Japan to Canada, and we had a six hour layover at Hawaii as we went to the beach. Then we continued to Canada. That was the big difference because Canada and North America is so different to Japan. The Japanese people were standing in line before the door opened, they were standing one hour in line to get their best seats. And when they were sitting listening during the show, they were quiet and they were watching. And the first shows,, I was like, 'Holy shit, they hate us. They hate us. They don't like what we are doing at all.' And then after the show, they come up to us and they speak to us with first names. They give us gifts, and they were crying because they were so happy with the show. So it was it was so different. Coming to Canada, people were chatting and they were speaking to us and they were shouting things. So very different. So in

that sense, yes. Very different.

But also within a country, places are different. And it depends so much on the vibe in the room. Over here, people are different than in North America. We have a different temper. I spoke with some friends in Poland. We have a project with a Polish band. They're coming here tomorrow actually flying over from Poland, and they were asking, what's the weather? And we were like, 'you know, it's dark.' It's kind of light for two hours during daytime. Uh, but now we have had clouds for a month. We haven't seen the sun in a month. And it's raining. It's raining all the time. And of course, why am I saying this? Yes, because people are different depending on where you go. And it depends on so many other things. Over here we are in a certain way and like we can't ignore the climate. The climate is definitely one reason why we are different here.

RRX: Do you have, um, something recorded at this point? I thought I had seen something that you guys had recorded. No, you had actually recorded two, Frandr and Frandr II.

GD: We have released two albums and an EP with the Polish project that we are doing. Just a month ago, we finished two new albums, so Frandr three and four.

RRX: What is it like in the studio when you have so many different instruments? I'm a blues dabbler, so, you know, my instruments in any band is going to be a drum set, an amp and a guitar and a bass, super basic. But you guys actually have a bigger spread of instruments. What's it like in the studio coordinating all that, or is it the same as if you're going to be up on stage?

GD: In a way it's the same as being on stage, and in a way it's not because it's in the studio. So of course it's different. I'm raised as a blues and rock guitar player and played rock bands my whole upbringing. I don't think this is too different, actually. I think it's the same. It's the same way of handling a band and handling the music. Of course, it's a bit different because like in a rock band, you have one melody instrument and that's the singer. Here we have three melody instruments. We have the fiddle, we have the flute, and we have the singer. That means that you have to find a place for all those instruments. But that's also what becomes interesting for us in there, because we have been working a lot; the easy way would be to just play the flute. You play the melody, fiddle, you play the second voice, I play the chords, bass. You play the bass notes like that's the easy way. But it's predictable.

And I think it becomes interesting when you start playing around with roles like if we want this or we want that this is the feeling we want in this song. We want it to sound like an electric guitar, like the riff should be so heavy. But who is the electric guitar in this band? Like, who is playing the riff? Is it me? Well, not necessarily. Maybe it's the fiddle. Maybe the fiddle is the one playing really growly, growly fifths on the fiddle, for example. Or okay, we need a keyboard line here because I hear Rock band in my head all the time. So I need a keyboard line here. Okay. Flute. Give me something that sounds like a key so that becomes interesting to start. We'll experiment with the different roles in the band.

RRX: Do you guys have any new songs or tours?

We have plenty of tours this spring. We have the US tour, US and Canada now and in March we are doing a Swedish run, and in April we are going to Norway for a show. Then in summer we have a bunch of tours. We are going back to Canada and the US and also festivals over here in Europe. And then in September we start releasing stuff. Also, we have an album coming out and we have singles coming out and we have many exciting things happening.

Prog Digest

By Klyde Kadiddlehumper

Before we begin in earnest - a nod.

Those in music locally will know that a dear friend lost her best friend, Coda, over the last few weeks. Constant Companion and I send our respects – IYKYK.

Now, the heart of the matter ... and the continuation of a long strange trip (with a nod to Bobby Weir). The trip hit one of the highlights of that bizarre journey. And what a ride.

For the holidays, CC gifted old Klyde with tickets to, as I put it, "Bill and Ted Do Beckett."

Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" is an absurdist masterpiece. At over 70 years old, the play is as fresh today as when it was first presented. For the love of Pete, Beckett is, after all, a Nobel Prize winner. That Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter starred is even more absurd.

This production, as with most I've found, got mixed reviews.

Reviews be damned. Hell, there were mixed reviews for the Sir Ian McKellen/ Sir Patrick Stewart production in 2013.

This was entertaining as hell. Gave a couple little gestures to Bill and Ted, and well, perhaps not the best ever, but who the heck takes this on at all?

The performance by Michael Patrick Thornton as Lucky is most memorable. The character's entire output is a single, maniacal, RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT Tommy Gun of a speech. That it is brilliantly written goes without saying, but the delivery – holy crap.

As you, dear reader, have gathered over time, Klyde is not the most stable of individuals. Some might say a bit off the mark. Nuts. Pixelated even. (Look it up, people – especially with respect to a certain pooka named Harvey).

The downstairs library (world's smallest home bathroom) contains a number of interesting volumes. To give a little look into the mind of Klyde – titles include:

"RuPaul: In His Own Words."

"Zombie Haiku."

"Quotations from Chairman LBJ."

"The Official Preppy Handbook" – where KK's alma mater was recognized with an Honorable Mention for the ability of its undergraduates to mix drinks comfortably in their stomachs.

And classics from undergraduate days:

Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead."

"The Communist Manifesto."

"Waiting for Godot."

Some classics. Some absurd. But at all times, with an eye toward a progressive mindset. One need not necessarily agree with a position or set of thoughts. However, trying to understand them is likely more important.

Long before this writer had heard of "Waiting for Godot," the absurdist train got rolling with the Firesign Theatre, giving us such comedy classics as "I Think We're All Bozos on This Bus," "Everything You Know is Wrong," and "Nick Danger – Third Eye."

Theater of the Absurd, a tragicomedy in two acts – it's life in those two acts. To the extreme.

Now, back to our movie – The Osmond Brothers Story starring The Jackson Five.

Until next time.

Klyde

ALL HAIL THE KING

A ROCK N' ROLL CELEBRATION OF MIKE "HUMPY" HUMPHREY

LIVE MUSIC FROM

BLACKCAT ELLIOT

BIG EMPTY

INNER-BRED CHICKEN HERDERS

BROTHER TO THE BOYS

THE CROWES

WALPURGIS

THE WASTED WORLD

PLUS OPEN JAM

ALL PROCEEDS FROM TICKET SALES, DONATIONS AND RAFFLES GO TO THE HUMPHREY FAMILY.

ALBANY ELKS LODGE

25 S ALLEN ST

ALBANY NY 12208

LIGHTS & SOUND PRODUCED BY

Raven EVENTS
Audio Lighting Video Photo Booth

FEBRUARY 28

12PM-8PM

$20 PER PERSON | RAFFLES | 50/50 | CASH BAR | FOOD

SPONSORED BY: RADIORADIOX.COM & XPERIENCE MONTHLY