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Xperience Monthly

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Dave Pirner. Photo provided.

Dave Pirner

Soul Asylum

by Jason Irwin

I recently had the chance to speak with Dave Pirner, the frontman of Soul Asylum, ahead of his upcoming acoustic show (with the band's guitarist Ryan Smith) on April 26 at Universal Preservation Hall in Saratoga Springs. We talked about the tour, Grave Dancers Union, the legacy of "Runaway Train," the music history of their hometown of Minneapolis, guitar choices, movies, and even Prince's legendary Super Bowl halftime show. Oh, and shoes. This was a fun interview.

RRX: Hi Dave. Can I call you Dave? And I'm glad to be speaking with you. Thanks for taking the time.

DP: Call me whatever you want. Dave is good. And sure.

RRX: We are all very much looking forward to the show in Saratoga Springs on April 26. It's actually two days before my birthday, so I might have to make that part of the birthday celebration.

DP: Ah, s*** man, I'm April 16.

RRX: I know it is. I Googled it.
DP: That's kind of weird, because I recently checked in with somebody who told me I should call my manager and change my Wikipedia entry. It says I was from Green Bay, Wisconsin. I actually know the guy who put that entry in there, and he said, "You're not from Green Bay?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, I'll change it." And I said, "No, you don't have to, because now, if somebody who is interviewing me says, 'So you're from Green Bay,' then I know they researched me on Wikipedia. I changed it, eventually.

RRX: So, as far as this tour goes, you're doing the songs acoustically with just you and Ryan Smith. That must be a very different dynamic than the way you've probably played them thousands of times.

DP: It's a really different dynamic - especially when talking about dynamics. It's

a little more labor-intensive, but it's also less chaotic. One funny thing is I actually have to change my shoes for electric shows, and I don't have to change for acoustic shows. There are a lot of ritualistic habits I fall into when playing electric. We started out electric. It's more nerve-racking ... more tactile. You're more exposed. It's intense because there's less of a wall of noise to play around in. With an electric guitar, you can hit a chord once and let it ring for a couple of bars. With an acoustic guitar, you can't really do that - you can't just stop strumming, because there goes your rhythm section.

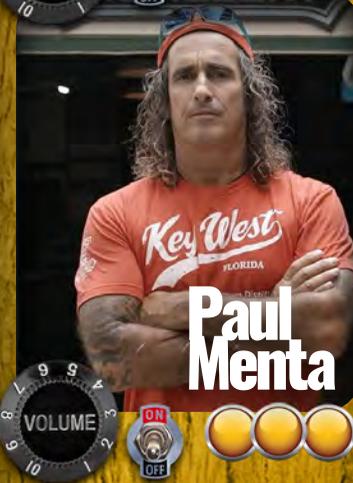
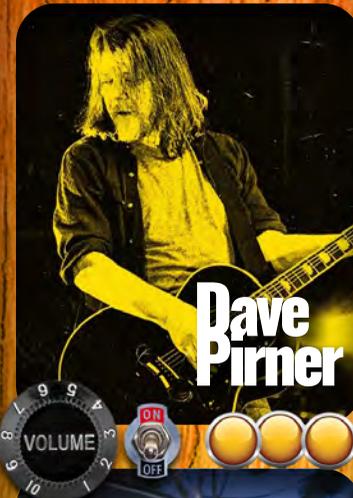
RRX: You mentioned shoes there. What shoes do you like better?
DP: (laughs) Wait...did you say shoes or shows?

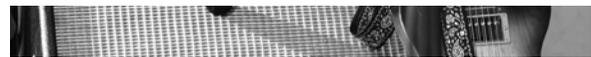
RRX: Shoes.

DP: Oh. I thought you said shows with a weird accent. (He laughs, and in a

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somewhat leprechaun-ish voice, says, "We have a really big shoe for you tonight...")

RRX: (Laughing) Nope — shoes.

DP: Well, the electric shoes are usually Chuck Taylor Converse. I'm just not comfortable in anything else. For the acoustic shows, I kind of forget about what's on my feet because I'm more stationary.

RRX: Since you mentioned shows too, do you prefer the acoustic shows or the electric shows?

DP: I like the electric. It's more bombastic, and you can't hear people talking. It's more of what Soul Asylum has always been about. But the acoustic thing is more intimate and more personal. At the same time, you're a little more in the frying pan because there's nowhere to hide.

RRX: Let's talk about "Grave Dancers Union." That's one of my all-time favorite albums from that era. What songs from that record show up in the acoustic

set? I'm guessing "Runaway Train" and "Black Gold." Any others that may be surprising?

DP: Yeah, those for sure. We also do "Somebody to Shove," "Without a Trace," and "New World." Those five songs often end up in the acoustic set. "Somebody to Shove" was interesting because it wasn't on anyone's brain that the song would work on acoustic guitar. When we did MTV Unplugged, we tried it, and it worked great. That's when I realized the song can stand on its own either way. Now that I'm thinking about it, most of those were written on the acoustic guitar.

RRX: I was just going to ask you that. Are most of your songs written acoustically?

DP: The genesis of the songwriting definitely goes back and forth between acoustic and electric.

RRX: Looking back at the era when "Runaway Train" exploded, did you have any sense of how big it would become?

DP: No idea at all. It came from a very

raw place. It wasn't until we finished the record that I noticed people gravitating toward it. We were looking for a manager, and one guy heard it and said, "I want to manage this band." I remember thinking, "What the f*** is up with that song?"

RRX: Well, it's a great song. The video for that song was incredible, too.

DP: I'm still friends with Tony Kaye, who directed that video. We still talk, and I don't have many relationships like that. He's just a fascinating character with a very visual perception. He went on to direct "American History X" after that. When we sat down, and he started talking about milk cartons and missing children, I was like ... wow, he's really onto something. It's always important for me to point out that the genesis - and that's the second time I've used that word. The word of the day. But that idea came from a British guy looking at milk cartons, going, "Maybe we could apply this to a music video."

RRX: Are you a Genesis fan? You

seem to like that word.

DP: I know. I think the answer to that question is ... I like Peter Gabriel as much as I don't like Phil Collins. I was never a huge fan of that band. Peter Gabriel, yes. Phil Collins, no.

RRX: My wife will be happy to hear that. She can't stand Phil Collins.

DP: I couldn't sing you a Mike and the Mechanics song. Wasn't Mike Rutherford in that band? There you go.

RRX: What's one of your favorite things to do besides playing Soul Asylum songs?

DP: Movies. I like anything from Kubrick and Scorsese to the Coen Brothers. Or, vehicles with Adam McKay and Will Ferrell. I just made a "Talladega Nights" pun. Is that a pun? I like old noir Hollywood movies and s*** like that. Foreign films, too, so I guess that officially makes me a film buff.

RRX: (This is where I hint at some of

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Kelly Rene'e Mooney

by Liam Sweeny

RRX: It's a lot of fun living in the present, but we all collect memories and give birth to dreams. We're talking dreams here. Where you see yourself next year? In the next five years?

KRM/VOA: Next year I see myself as having started getting out there doing gigs. In the next 5 years I see myself increasing my gigs. As I've definitely been creating a fan base in the meantime while working on my other niches! Many have said, "Where are you playing at?! Well, get out there! & we will come & see you perform!" "So I'm just going to say! Stay tuned guys! Because it's happening!" I have a lot of interests! I'm taking my life back! & following my dreams!

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

KRM/VOA: I believe in providing mutual support. It is so very important! My fellow performers love that about me! The list is endless! So I hope that they don't think that I've forgotten them if they haven't been mentioned here! But just some of those that I admire in my community are Frank Palangi, Sirsy, Margo Macero, Lucid Street, & Plush. They are worthy of a shout-out! They all have a great work ethic & give back to their fans

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

KRM/VOA: The very first reaction was "Wow!, that's you?! You are going places girl! Get out there & do your thing!"

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

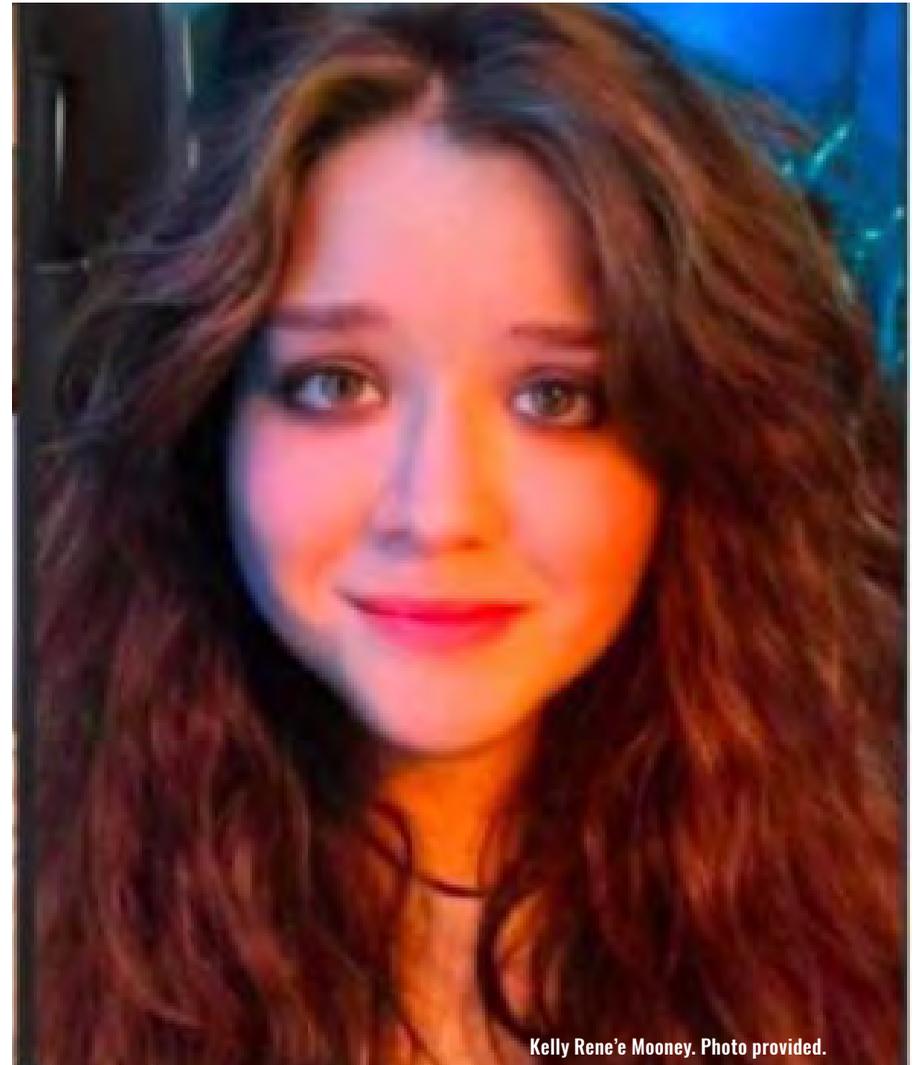
KRM/VOA: I'd have to say that I'd love to have all my songs solidly received. Even if they aren't chart climbers. I believe, that either way, as an artist, you've made a name for yourself to get as far as you've gotten. You are still being recognized on some level. You took the initiative & made it happen for you!

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

KRM/VOA: At this point, for me, I'd love to have a band backing me up! A drummer, guitarist, bass guitarist, keyboardist, & whatever else! I'm working on it! Who would be interested in making this happen!? Reach out to me! Has to be local!

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

KRM/VOA: Hmm! Great question! Something involving more cover songs!— & maybe some originals?! Maybe tributes? Or other! I'd love to collab & be a part of projects in my area! I'm thinking The Strand Theatre Hudson Falls or other. Maybe benefits? For the homeless, for the abused or other. I'd love for my 'Sing For The Children' to become a 501c3! It is a foundation /musical



Kelly Rene'e Mooney. Photo provided.

movement/ ministry geared towards child abuse awareness through music. Many were interested in being a part of it in the past. I'd love to make that happen! Hoping to add acting to my resume! & maybe some voiceovers as well! Maybe modeling? If I've got the voice or the look you're looking for —let me know!

What do you all see me doing?! I'd love to hear your answers!

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Mike Porter

Capital Region Timekeepers

by OP Callaghan

Hello music fans, I have a confession to make. A close friend of mine recently implied that I would soon run out of local drummers to interview for this column, and it got me thinking. I know several folks who use online tools such as ChatGPT to answer questions and provide insightful answers. So, I confess. I went and googled “Best Drummer In Albany”. I was not disappointed.

AI overview immediately pulled up the name Mike Porter. But who was Mike Porter? I was not familiar with the man, but you bet your ass I am now! Mike has been a session and live drummer in the area for decades. He’s a great player, and a wonderful guy (according to ME, not AI), so please welcome Mike Porter!

RRX: Welcome, Mike, great to have you with us. Tell me how you got started playing drums.

Mike Porter: Thanks for having me, OP! There were drums in my house as far back as I can remember. My older brother played a bit in high school, and had a drum set in his room when I was very little. I don’t remember playing it, but there are pictures of me as a baby sitting at the kit with sticks in hand!

RRX: Tell me about your first kit.

MP: For Christmas, I believe in 7th grade, my parents surprised me with a Cannon 5-piece kit in a candy red wrap. I played that kit every single day after school for hours. I wish I still had it! Sadly, I traded it for a DW Pacific kit when I started playing shows. Sometimes I wonder where my first kit is today ...

RRX: I will be on the lookout for a 5-piece cannon! Do you come from a

musical family? Do you play any other instruments?

MP: My dad and uncles also played drums and percussion in high school. I remember always hearing music in the house growing up, and finding my parents’ stash of old cassettes and LPs. I was fascinated with them, and I would pull out the artwork and read the liner notes while listening to the Human League, Bob Seger, Fleetwood Mac, stuff like that. A lot of great ‘70s and ‘80s stuff.

Besides the drum kit, I play the cajon and other hand percussion and electronic percussion instruments. Lately, I’ve been playing around with an old acoustic guitar along with my daughter, who is 8. It’s fun to be a beginner at something again!

RRX: The next generation! Have you taken lessons or self-taught? Matched grip, or traditional?

MP: I was self-taught as a beginner, for better or worse. I’m a lefty who plays a right-handed kit setup, kind of like Ringo. I play open-handed, with a matched grip. I would mirror what I saw other right-handed players do, except that I lead with my left hand. Since I never had lessons, no one ever told me it was “wrong,” which was probably a blessing!

As an adult in my twenties, I realized I needed to go back and sort of start from scratch. I called up my friend Mike Bruce (another great area drummer), who I’ve known since I was in high school, and asked him for some private lessons. Best decision I could have made!

RRX: Tell me about your first gig.

MP: My first gig was with a band called “Dewpoint Blank.” I was about 17,

the summer before my senior year of high school. We were a pop-punk band who wrote our own music. Our bass player had booked a tour of the East Coast, and this was our warm-up show. I had just joined the band, maybe two or three weeks before. The gig was at a friend’s house, in the garage. There must have been 50 other kids there, all piled into this little garage. Sweat was pouring off the ceiling. I remember a mosh pit and someone climbing up the loft and almost collapsing the whole thing on us while we played. Awesome show. Needless to say, I was hooked after that!

Who are you playing with now?

MP: Most recently, I was playing with the Vinny Michaels Band (a country rock band). I also sub in with the Doc Orloff Blues Elixir band. I love those guys.

From 2021 to 2024, I played in Yacht Masters NY, which was my pet project. We were a ‘70s & ‘80s yacht rock tribute act. Sadly, we lost our frontman, Todd Sardella, to pancreatic cancer just over a year ago. He was one of the best musicians I’ve ever played with and an all-around great guy.

Prior to that, during the Covid lockdown, I was in two studio bands at the same time: one called Shadowlight and one called Red Light Rivals with my friend Steve Morehouse. Before that was a cover band called the Shakedown. Before that was a band called Saving Atlantis that wrote original music and played covers, and also a jazz/rock band called the Grand Design. Then, before that was a band called East Avenue. And that brings us back to the beginning. All of those bands featured a few core members who I’ve

been playing with on and off for 20 years.

I’ve been able to play all around the Capital Region and up and down the East Coast. I’m very blessed.

RRX: Who are some of your early influences? Who influences you now?

MP: My earliest influence was Carter Beauford. Not long after, my high school music teacher and mentor, John Savage, turned me on to Dave Weckl and Dennis Chambers. He actually took me to see Dave Weckl play at the Van Dyck when I was about 16 or 17, which was mind-blowing at that point in my life. One of my earliest bandmates was a big Police fan, and he hipped me to Stewart Copeland, who remains one of my biggest influences. Then, of course, I discovered John Bonham, Neil Peart, and Phil Collins. I was also very much into the early 2000s emo/pop punk scene, and there were (and still are) a lot of cool drummers from that era.

These days, my influences change all the time. I find myself going back to the legendary session cats like Steve Gadd, Jeff Porcaro, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Jim Keltner for inspiration. Anyone who drummed on a Steely Dan record (Bernard Purdie, Jim Gordon, Keith Carlock, etc.) is a reference point. Ringo, of course, is on the list, as are Mick Fleetwood and Steve Smith. I’m still a big fan of Dave Weckl. Some contemporary guys like Nate Smith and Shannon Forrest blow my mind. Jimmy Chamberlin is incredible. Ash Soan, Griffin Goldsmith, and Aaron Sterling are all incredible. Benny Greb. Danny Carey from Tool. I’m excited to see Anika Nilles play with Rush. Questlove and the Roots made a record with Elvis Costello several years back, which has

some incredible grooves all over that thing. It goes on and on. And don't even get me started on all the great Nashville drummers ...

Most importantly, we have a ton of GREAT drummers in the Capital Region who inspire me probably as much, if not more than, the "big name" cats.

RRX: You are correct! There are a ton of great drummers in the Capital Region. Any gig horror stories?

MP: I've been pretty lucky to avoid most of the horror story cliches you hear about!

RRX: Tell me about a performance or recording that you are most proud of, thus far in your career.

MP:

Live gigs:

The first would be opening for Ty Herndon last year at the Wood Theater in Glens Falls. It was an acoustic show. That is a beautiful theater, and playing in that setting is definitely something different and special.

Next would be playing one of the main stages at LarkFest in Albany way back in 2008. I met Tom Morello for like 10 seconds - ha!

Recordings:

I'm really proud of the majority of recordings I've been a part of, especially the original songs. Recordings are like a diary of where you are as a musician at that moment in time. We always worked really hard in the studio to get what we were after.

These four songs are from different records by different bands, all original songs, which I recorded either at Tim Lynch's studio (The Recording Company) or in my home studio. I feel they represent my style and approach as a drummer pretty well. There's other recordings I'm proud of too, but unfortunately, that stuff isn't online!

1. The Grand Design - "The Kansas City Shuffle" | The Grand Design <https://share.google/C1H4ZDrf4TojGnhjW>
2. Shadowlight - "Misery" - <https://>

open.spotify.com/track/0Sfh2lhHajulsS8lEXfql?si=Hb-NMyQmMT7awNzOlg4leFQ

3. Doc Orloff - "Johnny's Mourning" - <https://youtu.be/bunozDwxpkc?si=a1mHkO3XbNotj1aN>

4. Red Light Rivals - "There Ain't Enough Time" - <https://youtu.be/EdyYBDNP04s?si=O-jLkPEOGg3VDN-uu>

Lastly, from 2013 to 2024, I helped produce an annual music festival in Gloversville, NY called "The Eddie." The festival was held in memory of a local musician and friend named Ed Lakata. A "who's who" of local acts played every year - sometimes as many as 20 acts across 2 stages. I'm really proud of being a part of this event and getting to play with some great musicians every year. The Eddie meant a lot to the community.

RRX: Anything else? Where can we see you play next?

MP: I'm taking some time off from gigging for a bit to spend more time with

my family. My two girls are growing up fast, and it's been a pleasure watching them find their own things that bring them joy! They definitely love music and enjoy watching their old man hit the drums, which makes me smile. They're my inspiration for sure.

It's kind of exciting to not know exactly what I'll be doing next, but I know I'll be back out playing again at some point soon. In the meantime I hope to do some more recording in my home studio.

Overall, I'm just very grateful to have been able to play music with my friends for over 20 years now. My advice to the people out there playing a ton of gigs would be: stay humble, be kind, never stop learning. And, slow down and take it all in from time to time. Like Ferris Bueller said: "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

Thank you, Mike! And thank you, Ferris.



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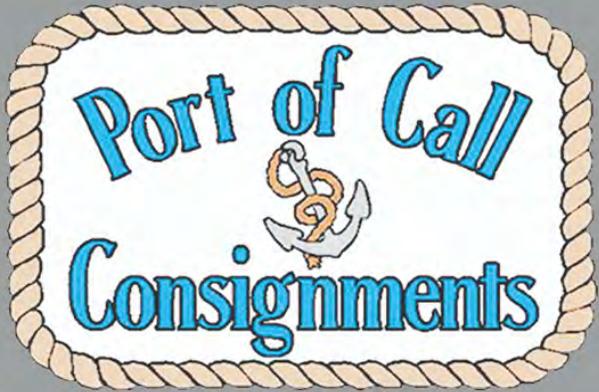
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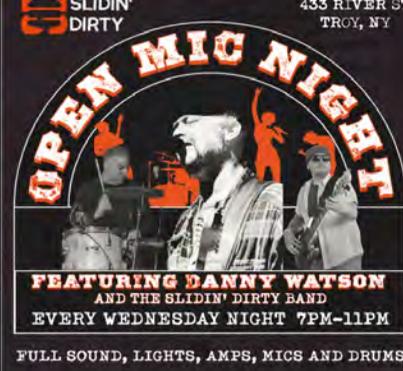
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Mike Mitchell

By Sara Busone



RRX: So tell me all about Lily girl!

Mike Mitchell: Yeah! She's actually 10 years old. She's actually a therapy dog. Back in Covid, 2022, we would walk around ... and people said, "she'd be a good therapy dog," and I'm like, "It's 115 dollars, I don't have the money." So I was in a church, the church executive ... they decided to help me out and went to get the money to get her registered for the parents program, and ever since we've been going to nursing homes. And then, I decided on doing costumes when I was doing

Comic-Con.

RRX: That's cool!

MM: And then I started walking around with different outfits, and I'm like, "Well, let's see if they have any dog outfits," so I started doing that. And I found a person on Etsy who actually makes dog costumes.

RRX: (To Lily) You look beautiful!

Lily: (Sniffs microphone)

MM: She's been a leprechaun; Agent M from Men In Black; from The Greatest Show, she's the lion and I'm BT Adam the Entertainer ... we do Easter ... she does Barbie (we do

Barbie and Ken) ... and then we do Beauty and The Beast – she has the Bella dress and everything ... we also do Captain America ... we also do Mr. Incredible.

RRX: I think I've seen you guys as superheroes!

MM: We actually do malls, nursing homes, we do parades ... walk around towns ... we do concerts... I just found out from the car show ... upstairs ... we're doing that April 21st.

We got a couple of events coming up ... we have one coming up this Saturday. We're going to actually be

here (Colonie Center). It's going to be a flea market, and the person who actually runs it sponsors us. So we're going to be here this Saturday and Sunday, raising money.

RRX: You guys do a lot for charity! Tell everybody where they can find you

MM: Schenectady K9 Ghostbusters on Facebook and on Instagram

RRX: Thank you guys so much for taking the time to talk to me! Say bye, Lily Girl!

Lily: (Sniffs microphone again)

Nocturnne

by Liam Sweeny

Natalie Kurgan lives the same sort of life that we all do, with the exception that, on some days and in some places, she goes by another name to pursue a vocation that is deeply satisfying. As Nocturnne, Natalie wows audiences with a powerful voice to go with her powerful stories.

RRX: Let's start with your stage name, Nocturnne. Everybody picks a stage name for a reason, even if that reason has to do with something silly. So where does Nocturnne come from?

Natalie Kurgan: Because I am a classical pianist and I have been all my life. And when I was really coming into music and, kind of falling in love with it, I identified a lot with Chopin and particularly with his "Nocturne." But if I were to go and just make my name Nocturne with one single N as a normal way of spelling it, you would never find me ever because all you would find is Chopin. So I took the initial for my first name, and I stuck it in there. And so now we have Nocturnne with technically 3 N's.

RRX: OK, so it comes from Chopin.

NK: Yeah.

RRX: I noticed that when I was looking at your page, there's a separation between your stage life and your normal life. Is it out of concern for privacy, or do you really feel a separation between your playing and your living? And do you keep some distance between the two? Does it actually help you with your music?

NK: Yeah, definitely. I need that separation. That's also part of why I have a stage name. Because when I started making music, I knew that I wanted my music to be famous, but I don't want me,

necessarily, as a human being to be famous. I don't want all the details of my life to be known. So it's to keep that separation, to keep my private life private. But also, I don't assume that everyone, my friends and my family, care about my music, and they don't need to. I don't care about everything they do either. I'm multifaceted, and so I guess that's why I keep it separated.

RRX: The risk when you're Clark Kent and Superman is that somebody's gonna put it together. Let's say you get to the point where you're really, really taking off, and the public kind of blurs them. Have you thought of how you would handle that?

NK: Oh, it's not like a secret. If you look, if you take a second to look it up, you'll know who I am. It's just to make one degree of separation. Just a little bit harder. In general, you never know who's watching. I just don't want it, I don't wanna make it so easy for people to get into my personal life.

RRX: Does it help you with your music itself? Like creating a separate character that's way more into the music, because that's the whole purpose of that character? Is it something like that?

NK: I don't know. I feel like my entire purpose in life at this moment is music. But then the other aspects - all of my personality - come into my music. So I spend a lot of time in nature, hiking outdoors, and that's pretty obvious if you listen to some of my songs and if you see the pictures. Even the videos are all me in the woods. Definitely, all aspects of my personality come through the music. It's really not a persona, because I don't have



the energy for that. But ... I won't share what my family is up to on the weekend on my music page.

RRX: You like the woods, you like the forest, and classical music. Whenever you hear classical music played, and there's some visual to it, like in a video or something, it's always the forest. It's always nature and stuff like that. Do you feel that there's an intrinsic connection between classical music and that kind of environment?

NK: Oh, I never thought of that before. For me, it makes sense. When you listen to classical music, you're slowing down, you're taking a breath. And I think we associate that with nature too, just being outside and unplugging. So maybe we

correlate them now. I don't know, that's interesting.

RRX: So you recently went to Germany.

NK: Yeah.

RRX: Now, were you there as a tourist, or were you playing, or was it something else?

NK: No, I was there for work. I took a few days at the end to be a tourist a little bit, but I'm an engineer full-time, so my parent company is in Germany, and so I had to go over for this program that I'm in.

RRX: Did you get a chance to check out the music in Germany and that world as it is over there?

NK: I would love to do that, but

honestly, I don't have the energy to do both. When I'm there for business, it's like 18-hour days, and then I sleep, and I wake up, and I do it all over again. And then by the time the weekend comes and I have a couple days, it takes everything in me just to drag my carcass out of bed and go explore the town. So I try to, once I finally am not working, I try to just unplug and see the area. I consider music as work too. It's just not, you know, my full-time job yet. So I try to unplug from all work and experience the place I'm in. But someday I hope to be there on a tour.

RRX: Right. No 18-hour days.

NK: Oh my God, no.

RRX: I can't imagine 18-hour days. That's crazy. OK, I have another question. I couldn't believe your voice when I first heard it. Clear, perfect pitch, and that didn't even do it justice. What it is, is really your confidence. You can project and just maintain that clarity in the notes. How did you learn, and what vocally do you work on the most?

NK: This is gonna be a really unsatisfying answer. I don't know. In 2018 - I'm 34, by the way - so in 2018, 8 years ago, I picked up a guitar for the first time, and I'm like, "I'm gonna learn this thing, and I'm gonna learn how to sing because I've never even tried before." And so I just started, and I learned six songs, and I went to an open mic, and I played my six songs. I feel like I'm still fumbling my way around and just trying out different vocal techniques. I have friends who are just incredible singers. So literally yesterday, I was asking Shannon Tehya, "What do you do when your voice is scratchy from allergies? How are you belting?" Because I really can't do it when I have allergies. And so that's how I'm learning.

RRX: There's gotta be some natural talent, too, because you really have that. So if you really didn't do much to learn, you must have had it all along.

NK: I think I have a strong background in music from being a classical pianist, so my pitch is really good. I'm

sorry, I don't have a better answer for you.

RRX: Why folk? You sing folk, so why folk? Do you think folk draws a certain temperament, or do you think that the narrative aspect appeals to people? Or is it something else?

NK: Oh, I don't write. I don't sit down and try to write in a specific genre for a specific reason. I just write, and that's what comes out, and I'm always on this journey to figure out what genre I am. Is it indie folk? Is it alt folk? I think it just

comes from what inspires me to write, which is generally the world around me, feeling some sort of frustration, or feeling like I have a message that I need to convey. And I think that lends itself well to folk despite its nature ... I grew up listening to '60s folk, '70s folk, a lot with my dad. But then I'm also a '90s child, so I really love '90s grunge and 2000s rock, like alternative. I'm just a mutt. It all comes together.

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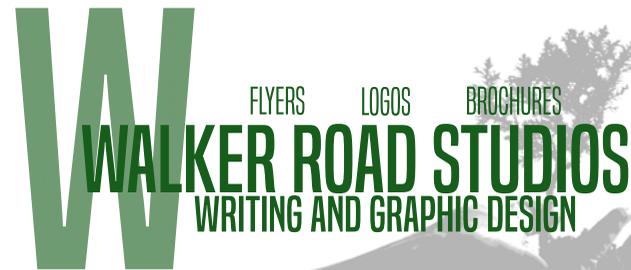
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...2...3...4 Not Choosing Is Choosing

by Chris Busone

“There are two types of people in this world; avoid them both.”

So says renowned German philosopher, and preeminent pessimist, Arthur Schopenhauer. And while I'll grant him that that's hilarious, and that there may not have been a whole hell of a lot to be optimistic about in 19th-century Germany, I'm surprised to see that there are some among us today who seem to think that Arthur may have been on to something.

I like to think we can find some sort of middle ground, no matter our differences, be they philosophical, political, or musical. And it is the subject of the latter that leads us to a conversation I had recently with another great philosopher named Arthur, Art Fredette.

I was visiting the RadioRadio studios for one reason or another and had a back-and-forth, as I often do, with one of my favorite people and my great friend, Art Fredette. As we meandered from subject to subject, Art relayed to me the story of him finding a Beatles album (“Meet the ...”) in his father's record collection as a young lad. When Art the junior showed Art the senior the album, surprised at his father's affinity for the Liverpudlians, his dad said, “They're okay. But they're not Elvis!”

I had been looking for inspiration for my next column, and Art's tale of a rock & roll changing of the guard of sorts provided it. (Consequently, all proceeds from this column will be donated to the Art Fredette Foundation for Struggling and Uninspired Writers.)

His story made my disjointed mind flash to the age-old (and profoundly boring) question: Elvis or the Beatles? And

while that query is something I have absolutely no interest in discussing or writing about, Art's story led me down a more thought-provoking path. Why in the good Christ do I have to choose in the first place? Why are we made to feel like we have to pick a musical genre or contemporary artists, and live and die with them? Why in the hell can't I love Elvis and The Beatles, the Stones and Zeppelin, Miles Davis and Chet Baker, and Tiny freaking Tim alike? Why can't I dig everything from Guy Lombardo to David Bowie?

My playlists are made of a pantheon of musical giants, coupled with artists that I had never even heard of before Amazon Music suggested them. And their respective musical makes and models are from diametrically opposite sides of the musical spectrum. And although that has always been my own personal approach, I am absolutely sure I'm not alone.

I was in fact just playing a list in my car that included Louis Jordan's “Beans and Corn Bread” directly followed by “Welcome to the Jungle” by Guns N' Roses. “Beans and Corn Bread” and Guns N' Roses ... dinner and a show.

There are also times, rather than a playlist, when I want to hear an entire album, track for track, the way the artist assembled it. I did two weeks last month listening to Counting Crows' “August and Everything After” record (still just so incredible), then a week of “Nevermind” by Nirvana. That was closely followed by Mel Torme with Marty Paich's “Dek-Tette” (“Lulu's Back in Town”!) and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band's self-titled debut, which kicks off with “Born in Chicago”

right into “Shake Your Money-Maker.” Come on!

Look, my point here isn't to proclaim what a musically well-rounded and open-minded individual I am, and that you should all stop what you're doing and build creepy little shrines to me in your foyers. It's to try to illustrate that those who limit themselves to one musical genre or group of like-minded artists are doing just that: limiting themselves. It's akin to going to the most sumptuous smorgasbord imaginable and standing in the corner eating the same deviled egg over and over again. Sample the fare! Taste the difference! Live la Vida Loca!! Vive la France!!! WOLVERINES!!

Okay, so I may have gotten a little carried away there ... I'm just saying, ya know, maybe try something different sometimes, maybe ... ya know?

Or don't.

If you're truly content with banging to Megadeth's “Rust in Peace” or still trippin' on Floyd's “The Dark Side of the Moon,” then go ahead and shine on you crazy diamond (yea, I know that song's on “Wish You Were Here,” but Jesus Christ I'm trying to go somewhere with this). If that's what makes you feel the burn, then ignore the last eight or nine paragraphs, or however many it ends up being after editing, and keep doing what you're doing. My point is, you can choose NOT to choose.

Now there are those who will pontificate that “not choosing is choosing,” but those people bother me, so screw them. My choice for a perfect day starts with my wife and Bloody Marys and Miles' “Birth of the Cool” in the morning, Robbie Robertson's 1987 self-titled album and poached eggs on crab cakes for brunch,

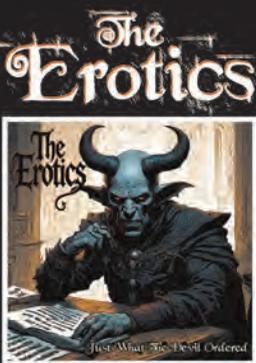
followed by John Doe's “A Year in the Wilderness” (favorite track “The Golden State”) with a steak at dinnertime, then wrapping it all up with a night out listening to local legends like Trauma School Dropouts with a few Jack-on-the-rocks. That is a well-rounded diet if I ever saw one. All the food groups are represented here.

Now, admittedly, I'm just naturally contrary, so getting a straight answer out of me to any question is a task in and of itself. But when I'm painted into a corner and faced with a “YOU MUST CHOOSE” scenario, I'm always gonna default to a non-committal, sarcastic, expletive-laden answer that frustrates the asker. It's the poet in me.

So here you go: F-CK “either or,” F-CK “this or that,” and really, really F-CK “Elvis or the Beatles.”

And while I recognize that that is a sentence in a suicidal search for alliteration, all I'm trying to say, my devoted readers, is just try whatever looks good on the menu. That's my philosophy. It's my philosophy when I listen, and it's my philosophy when I play. So you may see me at my next show playing a classic hit of my own (I'm using the word “hit” sardonically here) or one of someone else's hits, or even “Tiptoe Through the F-CKIN' Tulips” for all I know. Either way, I'll be counting them all off with the same amount of grit and gusto, 'cause it's all good, and good for you. So belly up to the bar and count it off with me, 2...3...4.

(Also ... Beatles. WTF are you thinking? Of course Beatles ... or maybe Elvis ... sh*t!)



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Khary

by Rob Smittix

KHARY: Let me get this burp out real quick. (burp) There we go. All right, should be good.

RRX: (Laughs) Sounds good. Hey man ... one of my jobs here is to interview people, and a lot of times I'm assigned people to interview and that's fine and everything, but I'm just an absolute fan. I've been digging everything I'm hearing, so I just wanted to chat with you. Thanks for doing this.

KHARY: No worries at all, man.

RRX: One of the things that I found interesting about your music is ... you seem like you're a young guy, but your hip hop seems a lot different than a lot of the new hip hop that's being released, if that makes sense?

KHARY: Yeah, no, that makes sense. I get what you mean.

RRX: I grew up on hip hop. God, in the '80s, man, it was LL Cool J and all those guys ... what do you think was the greatest era of hip hop?

KHARY: I'm a 34-year-old millennial ... the era I came up in was probably like ... a lot of my favorite artists are from the 2000s, like mid-2000s.

There's this era of Double XL, I think it was their second freshman cover when they had Lupe Fiasco on the cover, Kid Cudi, Asher Roth ... there's a few other artists, but that was probably my favorite era. Older eras that not even influenced me but just got me really into hip hop was probably the A Tribe Called Quest era, I would say.

RRX: In my opinion, A Tribe Called Quest is the greatest rap group of all time.

KHARY: Hmm, I'm going Outkast,

but I see the vision.

RRX: I could lean that way too, but I always had that New York thing going on. Most of my favorite rappers are from New York, but now one of my favorite rappers, I think, is from Providence, Rhode Island. Is that where you're from?

KHARY: Yeah, that's where I grew up from the age of 3.

RRX: So yeah, we're branching out, we're still East Coast, though.

KHARY: Something like that.

RRX: That's cool. What was it like growing up in Providence? I've been through it a couple of times, but never really had the pleasure to chill out there.

KHARY: I mean ... growing up there, you probably didn't miss much. It's a much cooler place now than it was back then. I mean, even now, it still kind of has its drawbacks, just being a very small city. It's a lot more lively and cooler things going on now. But when I was growing up there ... just small towns feel very confining. If anyone did music, within a couple of months, you knew who was doing certain things; it's just that small. But the benefit of that, though, there were a lot of opportunities for me. Whereas I got my start really just being my brother's hype man, and he would sneak me in clubs when I was under 18 and stuff, and I'd just be the hype man on stage. Through that, I met other people. When you're in a smaller place, they see this young kid who's really into hip hop and really into like studying it, you know? I was buying CDs every week from the '90s and '80s and just really



Khary. Photo provided.

brushing up on the history of it. There's this promoter named Charles who started putting me on a lot of shows. Like I was opening up for Cannabis, Killer Priest, and random nineties rappers who would come to do a B market, or I guess Rhode Island's probably like a C market ... but being small, they provided me a lot of opportunities to get better.

RRX: No, that's true. If you go back to the nineties, and I would say 1993 for me was like the golden year of hip hop. But if you weren't in New York City or say LA at the time ... there wasn't much of a hip hop scene outside

of that because it wasn't getting put on to MTV. It wasn't being played on the radio, so if it existed, the country didn't know about it. The times have changed a little bit. With the little fish, big pond scenario, where now you don't have to go anywhere. Even if you're a country singer, you don't have to go to Nashville anymore. It might do you better to stay in your small town or your small city so that you can shine there.

KHARY: Yeah, I mean ... we're definitely in a different era, in that regard.

RRX: Now, I've seen today a post that you put up, "fakey laser flips." So

you're a skater as well?

KHARY: Yeah, that was actually what I was into before I started rapping. Granted, it was a short window of when I got into both. I started skating probably when I was 15 or 16. I actually stopped at some point cause I just got more into rapping. I'll always do it on and off, just like a little bit throughout the years, but about three and a half years ago, I was like, damn ... I don't have any hobbies in life. I was just trying to reconnect with myself, and I'm really back into skating now. I'm better than I ever was. I definitely couldn't do fakey laser flips when I was a kid.

RRX: Nice. Skating has been something that's been near and dear to me for quite some time. Skaters used to listen to punk rock. They skated to punk rock, or they skated to underground hip hop music, basically anything that could've made the Tony Hawk soundtracks.

KHARY: (Laughs) yeah.

RRX: They're literally perfect soundtracks, but these days I'm seeing these amazing skateboard videos, and they're skating to Drake or something ... I don't know, man, it's not really the same kind of vibe.

KHARY: This is one of the most amazing and bad things about skateboarding: it is one of the truest gate-kept countercultures that ever existed. To this day, selling out is still an important thing to people in the community. Like making sure people aren't selling out, or posers, or X, Y, and Z. So you have this thing that allowed it to be cool for a long time, but it also doesn't promote new skaters. Because of that, it also doesn't allow skaters to make that much money because people are so anti-selling out. I say all that to say this ... skateboarding is so counterculture that I think at this point it's almost counterculture to skate to Drake in a weird ironic fashion, or some of these songs ... they were really into like Chief Keef. They might still be into it, but there was an era where skaters

were skating to drill music, like drill hip hop from like Chicago or Detroit. I could see people skating to like stuff just because at some point whatever was counter becomes the norm, so you either have to counter against the norm or find something new.

RRX: That was very well said, but it breaks my heart when I don't think they even know that's not skateboarding music. What I like about a lot of your songs is that it is skateboard music. Is it hip hop? Yeah, but you do have that alternative kind of punk feel to you as well, that's got a mass appeal that you have to many different audiences.

KHARY: It's been a big journey to that sound. Originally, I started off just completely hip hop into boom bap rap and stuff like that. I even got into the Drakes, I got into more sort of R&B stuff, the pop stuff ... I like everything in some capacity. But almost tying it back to me getting back into skating - I got bored with straight-up rapping just because I've been doing it for 10+ years. Skating helped me figure out who I was again. It was happening at the same time that I really got into alternative rock, punk rock, and grunge. You mentioned the Tony Hawk soundtrack - that was my introduction to most rock because I grew up on hip hop. No one was listening to that s*** where I'm from, or just circles I was in, definitely not my family. Now that I've found myself through skating again, I got into this alternative rock, and it gave me a new way to express myself. I like to say it sounds familiar, but it's also new through my own lens. I feel very comfortable where I'm at sonically right now.

RRX: Well, you are the "Big Man!"

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Paul Menta

Speaker of the House of the Conch Republic, Key West

by Liam Sweeny

RRX: When I think of the Keys, I think of Jimmy Buffett and that laid-back feel, but is there a more nuanced musical scene in Key West? Is there a conch metal or a conch funk? Is there anything like that, or is it really just that laid back?

PM: They have a thing every year. It's called the Iggy Awards. And it's for musicians in Key West and the Keys. It's kind of our Grammys. And I got to give the best rock and roll band. And it was funny because I said, "This is the best-kept secret in the world." The music scene down here is unbelievable, and like the melting pot we are. You can see Buffett-style stuff, you can see metal-style stuff, you can see the influence from Nashville, New Orleans. I mean, it's stunning to see people from all walks of life find music that they like down here. Any song is gonna include something about rum, something about being under a palm tree, being out on a sandbar, or just kind of kicking your feet up and relaxing, whether it could be metal, or it could be kind of a country, it doesn't matter; it all blends in. And that's what's kind of cool about Key West, because you notice that musicians take their style, and then Key West kind of captivates them a little bit, and they blend a little bit of that in. So we end up with some really unique versions of music, original music as well, that gets transformed down here.

RRX: OK, so you are the Speaker of the House of the famed Conch Republic. I've known this story for a while now, but can you tell us the inside perspective of that? How did we get the

Conch Republic?

PM: It's actually really good because I just had Dennis Wardlow stop by, who is one of the key founders of the Conch Republic. He was our mayor in 1982. I actually have it. If I ever get it published ... I got my outline and everything written ... I have a book on this because I have been wanting to set the record straight for a long time. There's a lot of confusion on the Conch Republic.

So ... just to give you some quick backstory, we had the Navy pull out in the late '50s and in the '60s. So it really hurt the island, OK? It slowed down what was going on. You had tourism starting to perk up. And then we had about 350 shrimp boats down here, which really kept the island kind of functioning. And then you had the gas crisis in 1976. So what happened was, if you went out shrimping, the gas probably cost as much as the load that you went out to do. So then comes in the term square grouper. Do you know what a square grouper is?

RRX: No, no.

PM: So a square grouper is a bale of marijuana. It was easier to make the call out, and somebody says, "Yup, shrimping, yup, I'm coming in. I've been out getting square groupers." And the fishermen were getting square groupers because they can make more money and not have to spend the time out. So that went on for a bit of time. But then, unfortunately, other drugs came into effect. Key West is not into that - scary people going on. So you have that happening. Another big lull in Key West income.

Then, I think it was 1980, you had the Mariel boat lift from Cuba, and the news reports, as they are, were like, "all the criminals are running loose in Key West." So tourism just got blasted again. And everybody that came in off of that was immediately bused up to Miami. So it was a false thing. So they were at a tipping point. In 1980, 1982, when the border patrol had (this sounds familiar) put up a roadblock right at the edge of the 18 mile stretch, to check for drugs and illegal aliens. Coming down to the Keys, there was a line that was three hours long to get to the Keys. So people weren't coming down here, and literally, it shut down the island. There was no tourism. So this led up to a tipping point where we've had enough. So the mayor, David Horan, and the lady from the Chamber of Commerce went up to have their day to go sue the federal government to get an injunction to stop it (David Horan being a lawyer down here in Key West). They went up to go do that in front of a federal judge, pleaded their case, and the federal judge said there wasn't enough to make them go away. And they basically said, "Well, you know, how many people have you gotten?" And they had gotten a couple of German tourists that left their passports back at the hotel. They got about one ounce of weed, and they were like, "Well, of course," because they're checking for drugs; there was probably more drugs on the side of the road in this ten-mile backup than there was at the checkpoint.

When the news media asked, he just said this: if we're gonna be treated

like a foreign country, we're gonna act like one. So tomorrow we will secede from the United States. And he pulled out a flag, which was our city flag. Our city flag, which is the Conch Republic flag, was made by Claude Valdez in 1969. So this wasn't something new. We've already had these assets. And he won a contest for making the city flag. So he's kind of our Betsy Ross; we call him of the Conch Republic. And he waved that flag and got down.

By the time he got to Key West, it was all over the radio, cause back then it was just radio and some news media saying Key West is seceding from the United States. And there were people that were calling for him to be charged for treason, 'cause they thought they're gonna take down the American flag and everything. This was all done in humor, and also to make a point. And so the next day, he got a call from the Coast Guard and the Navy, saying you cannot attack or bomb us. And he was like, "We don't plan on attacking you," and all this kind of stuff. It's because a guy was going around who flew the aeroplanes and they were making conch fritters and bollos and I told everybody they're gonna go drop them on the navy and stuff like that and you know, the navy was like, "look, we don't want anything dropped on us," and he's like, "Yeah, you guys are gonna eat so much, you won't be able to do anything." I mean, this all wasn't meant to be anything, but got taken very seriously. There were some protests. Dennis' life was being threatened. And then, when they realized they were just raising the Conch

Republic flag, they invited the Navy and the Coast Guard there. As soon as they seceded, they immediately surrendered and asked for diplomatic immunity and a million dollars. And as Dennis likes to say, they're still waiting on the check. Eventually, because it made so much news and put so much pressure, probably about a month or so later, the checkpoint was removed.

RRX: Gordon Ramsay made his way to the Keys for his show "Uncharted." Usually when it comes to shows, people are going to Ramsay. In the case of this show, he's coming to you. He's facing off against you, ultimately. What do you think he took away from the Keys, and what did you take away from your time on that show?

PM: I can tell you that's part of the reason they sought me out. I always said to people they were looking for this Michelin-star, high-end chef that could do all this different stuff and had all these skills, and they're like, "wow," and I'm like, "yes." He wasn't available, so they picked me, but they sought me out. He really wanted to compete against me because of the multitude of things I do. Because I go in the water and I spear fish and go get my own lobster. I've cooked fine dining. I've cooked Conch Republic soul food, and when Gordon got here, that was part of my thing to the producers. If I can't show them the 200 ft level that locals see here all the time, I don't wanna do it. I don't wanna show the typical things that everybody sees. So Gordon was transported to do everything we did by boat. So he got to see Key West like we did, and I'm telling you, man, his mind was blown.

I gotta tell you, like we're sitting out on barrels, you know, ten miles offshore on a sandbar with the water lapping up, and he's just like, "I just can't. This is why they call it the backcountry or the back." I'm like, "Yeah, this is our backyard, you know," I'm like, "we have more ocean than we do land."

Every spot, everything we did, he just had a new love for the Keys. And when you see a guy like that, who travels around the world and everything, even the producers are like, "Hey, he wants to hang out here more, do this more," And I believe he even stuck back to the Keys.

I think about six months later, I did some fishing with his family and was able to cause he was like, "I just can't believe what you guys have here. Like, this is a secret. I just didn't know." And then he also got introduced ... I introduced him to the food culture here, which nobody is aware of. For me, that was really where I got to feel like, wow, Key West is finally getting its due down here. Because we have Bohemian and Cuban, and this melting pot down here, and we have such a great food culture that people just don't know about it. And once he got into it, he really got into it. So by the time we had our cook-off, he had an arsenal of stuff he was pulling out, so it was kind of cool. He didn't really like standing in the water cooking, and then didn't realize I was laughing because he's like, "Why are you in your bare feet?" I'm like, "you'll find out." And then the tide came in, and we were calf deep trying to cook, But I gotta tell you, the most shocking thing for me was, when I do interviews or talk to people, I say, "Listen, I've travelled around the world, and I've met thousands of amazing cooks, and I've only met six good chefs in my lifetime." And now I will say that I've met seven good chefs, because that guy's got skills. We were cooking, unscripted, out in the middle of nowhere, doing whatever, and that guy could just rally. He's got skills, man. That's what was impressive to me about him, that he came from kind of the same background I came from, working as a dishwasher to prep cook, to working his way up the line, and you could tell just by the way he could handle himself in any situation.



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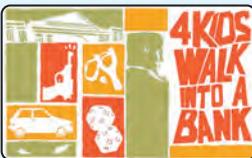
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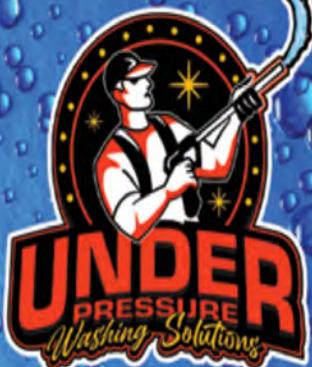
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The Worms Crawl In The Worms Crawl Out

by Art Fredette

The dictionary says an earworm is:

1. a catchy song or tune that runs continually through a person's mind.

"the whole album is packed full of earworms that get stuck in your head"

Every morning for as long as I can remember, I have awoken with a song in my head. Rarely has it been a good song, and usually it leaves me somewhat irritated. What causes this? I haven't the foggiest. Why can't it be a song I like? Again, no clue, but there it is just bouncing around in all its "Muskrat Love" glory.

Mondays are bad enough without Shania Twain's "Man! I Feel Like a Woman" rattling around my noggin, but here we are. WHY?

According to the interweb and the all-powerful ChatGPT, earworms happen because the brain involuntarily replays catchy and simple tunes when it is triggered by stress, boredom, or anxiety. Well ... I must be the most bored, anxiety-ridden, stressed person in the history of the world. Otherwise, why would crappy country songs and large bricks of AM gold from the '70s be on shuffle inside my mind?

So, after pondering this question for many years, I decided to keep a

diary of daily earworms for 30 days. What would I find? Is there a connecting thread? Or could it be that I just spent too much time with my headphones on and I am now an adle-brained jukebox of half-songs on repeat? So here goes:

- DAY 1 - "Lonely is The Night" - Billy Squier
- DAY 2 - "If You Could Read My Mind" - Gordon Lightfoot
- DAY 3 - "I Wanna Be a Lifeguard" - Blotto
- DAY 4 - "We Like To Party" - The VengaBoys - I mean W ... T ... F!!!!
- DAY 5 - The theme from "Love Boat" - ???????? - REALLY?
- DAY 6 - "So Far Away" - Carole King
- DAY 7 - "Billy Don't Be A Hero" - Paper Lace - There's that AM gold sneaking in.
- DAY 8 - "Heartbreak Beat" - Psychedelic Furs
- DAY 9 - "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do" - Neil Sedaka
- DAY 10 - "Cat Scratch Fever" - Ted Nugent
- DAY 11 - "Octopus' Garden" - The Beatles - Have I ever told you how much I disdain the Beatles?
- DAY 12 - "Comes A Time" - Neil Young
- DAY 13 - "Only Women Bleed" - Alice Cooper

DAY 14 - "Hot Stuff" - Donna Summer - Disco? Really? F'in disco?

Just about the halfway point here. I am questioning everything I have ever thought about my mental stability.

DAY 15 - "96 Tears" - ? and the Mysterians

DAY 16 - "You Picked a Fine Time to Leave Me Lucille" - Kenny Rogers. Please, leave me, Lucille, and take Kenny with you.

DAY 17 - "Midnight Rider" - Allman Brothers

DAY 18 - "Baby Come Back" - Player

DAY 19 - "A Matter of Trust" - Billy Joel. Great, the Long Island Liberace makes his debut. Thank God it wasn't "Piano Man."

DAY 20 - "You Oughta Know" - Alanis Morissette.

DAY 21 - "Stepping Stone" - The Monkees

DAY 22 - "Fashionable People" - Joel Plaskett. This is spare parts Bud.

DAY 23 - "Little Lies" - Fleetwood Mac

DAY 24 - "Soul Love" - David Bowie

DAY 25 - "You'll Never Find Another Love Like Mine" - Lou Rawls - AM radio rears its ugly influence

again!

DAY 26 - "The Flame" - Cheap Trick - great band, shit song

DAY 27 - "Love Is in the Air" - John Paul Young. Does anyone even remember this guy?

DAY 28 - "Like the Way I Do" - Melissa Etheridge. Um, ok.

DAY 29 - "Too Shy" - Kajagoogoo

Coming up on the end of this experiment. I am more befuddled than enlightened. What will the last worm be?

DAY 30 - "Dirty Work" - Steely Dan. At least, I closed out with a good song.

30 days, 30 songs from the deep recesses of my psyche, and no real answers. My question, Dear Reader, am I alone in this? Do you have worms? Earworms, that is? One thing I can add is that if you do, I hope your list is as varied as mine and free of John Paul Young.

Faith Kelly

by Liam Sweeny

We first met Faith Kelly during our second issue, when she was co-starring in an independent film. Since then, she's been all over the country, and she's found all of the cool scenes. Welcome Faith,

RRX: Let's go back. So eight year years, let's just say 8 years. 8 years ago you're, you're in a film while you guys are filming a film, and then we interviewed you. So, uh, take it from there and, uh, and I'll interject if I have any questions.

FK: Cool, well, I mean, let's see, I think that was like 2018-ish, um, maybe 2019. I think it's like winter February '19, so I won't give you all the details because then it would be very long,

RRX: Right, true.

FK: I went on and I shot *Walk Away*, which is a feature film, and that was a horror movie. That one did pretty good. That one's out now. I think I did a few other short films in that area, but pretty much right after I did two feature films in 2019 and after that. So the one didn't come out yet though, that's called *Family Values*. It should be out soon, which is funny because it's so many years later. Mid-September 2021, I was invited to some open mics out in the Catskills, which is where I'm living now and eventually I went out to one and I met my now fiance, Caswyn Moon. Ultimately through that whole situation, everyone was going through life changes around 2021, and the band disbanded, and we went separate ways. I went on to do the solo thing.

RRX: Do you think being on the road so much and going so many different places every year impacts the

music? Do you think that has any effect on the music itself?

FK: My new album *Halfway Decent* is a lot of songs about being on the road. It informs a lot of the music and it also informs us about how it gives you a better idea of what's really going on. So you can hear word of mouth from friends and you can watch the news and all this other bull. Or you can go out, and see it for yourself. Yeah, that's kind of what we did when we went on our first tour to Florida, Politics aside, everyone's like, 'oh, be careful down there because they didn't like the politics or whatever,' and I'm like, 'I'm trying to go to the beach, you know, I was trying to go to the beach and play some shows. I've never been to Florida, so I was like, 'I just wanna go check it out. When we came back with all these great stories and a lot of people were just like, 'oh really? In a pocket full of friends you get out of your fish bowl and actually go. 'See, you realise that people are actually pretty cool.'

Yeah. It's not as scary and, and horrible as it, it's being made out to be. And then also every little town and every state or city, small town, small city, big cities, there's always a cool little scene and sometimes it takes some digging to find it, but there's cool people everywhere just trying to do cool sh*t, you know, like the whole journey was like let's just go see what's going on.

And then you end up finding yourself jamming with a lot of new people and discovering new music, and then that informs how you play. Here's a lot

of different venues that we play. We'll play a gay bar one night and then a punk bar, and then a hillbilly bar, and then a group Brewery and then a bistro and they're like, 'OK, keep it down so alright, tonight's show I'm gonna go full rock and roll and head bang and do the back bend and then, okay, today's show we're gonna pull it back a little bit, lean more into the folkiness.

Because our music is really different right now. We're two individual artists. We don't write together. She does her thing. I've been doing mine. We go on a tour and she comes back with a whole album, but it takes me like a decade to write a 3 chord song. Yeah, but I'm better towards an older crowd too, so if it's a mellower kind of atmosphere. I more or less take the lead on what's going on, but if it's more of a funk venue and you know. Super high energy, then that's when she'll take over the main although you we have some rockers we stay with you too so it's kind of cool, because you get with what we do you get two completely different styles that actually work together.

That's awesome. Yeah, we've been called time capsules because we don't do a lot of covers. It's all originals, but it's different. I don't know how else to describe it, just a different sound.

RRX: Being that you guys have been all over the place, is there any place that has a really kick ass scene that is unsung or underrated?

FK: Oh, Bisbee, Arizona. People think of Arizona, they think of Tucson or Phoenix. It's like you drive, you get

off Highway 10, drive 45 minutes down to the border, and there's this little town that's just awesome music scene, a lot of music venues. You can go walk around town any night and find music. Then holy smoke, you know, Florida. It's funny because people have a view of Florida, what it is, Margaritaville, blah blah blah. There is a punk scene in Florida that is unrivalled and it's just so underground. There's a little town called Stewart, Florida, and they got this place called The Stand. And you're in this rich Florida looking neighbourhood. And all these punks come rolling out and there's this really cool music scene. And so you get a lot of these towns, you know, a lot of states to get these raps. Then you really get in there. And you're like, holy smokes, like Texas, man, we have a lot of fun in Texas too. Texas has Corpus Christi, which has an awesome music scene. We played with the band up in Hoosick Falls, New York. Mallet Brothers I think from these pockets that I would have never heard of these guys unless we played a show with them. And then all of a sudden we played a show with the Mallet Brothers and this whole music scene opens up that we didn't know about. Another awesome music scene is up in Minot, North Dakota. That's a place that we try to get to.

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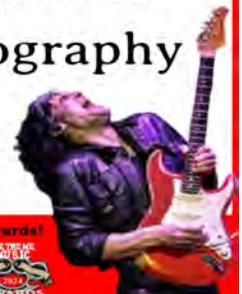
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Music Notes

The Art and Science of Music

by Peak Music Studios

Say No Three Times

People often ask what it takes to become a musician. The question usually circles around talent, natural ability, the right equipment, the right teacher, or the right opportunity. Those things can help, but they tend to distract from what actually moves someone forward. Becoming a musician comes down to something much less exciting and much more consistent than that, and it usually starts with a few clear decisions: not quitting when it gets hard, not staying where it feels comfortable, and not settling for doing just enough to get by.

A musician becomes a musician by doing the work over time. That means playing the instrument, practicing the passage that doesn't quite work yet, writing the lyric even when it feels forced, and singing the note until it settles into place. It also means coming back the next day and doing it again, whether you feel like it or not. That part is where most people fall off, not because they can't do it, but because they stop.

This idea has been around for a long time. Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." You don't need philosophy to see it, though. Anyone who has stayed with a skill long enough recognizes the shift. What feels awkward at first starts to feel manageable. What once took full concentration becomes something you can control. That change doesn't come from talent. It comes from repetition, and from sticking with something long enough for it to take hold.

One of the biggest things that gets in people's way is the belief that successful musicians are simply the ones who were naturally gifted from the start. Early ability can make the beginning easier, but it doesn't carry someone very far. At some point, everyone runs into the same wall, where progress slows down, and the work becomes less rewarding. The people who move past that point are not necessarily more talented. They are the ones who keep going when it stops being fun.

There is another pattern that shows up just as consistently. The musicians who continue to improve are also the ones who don't settle into what is comfortable. Comfort in music can be very convincing because it sounds good. You are playing songs you know, running scales that sit easily under your fingers, and staying inside patterns that don't give you trouble. It feels like progress, but it usually isn't.

Real growth tends to show up somewhere else. It shows up in the passage that keeps falling apart, the rhythm that won't quite lock in, the scale that feels uneven, or the note that takes more control than you currently have. Most people avoid those areas because they are frustrating and expose what isn't working yet. The musicians who improve are the ones who spend time there anyway, not perfectly, but consistently.

Over time, that choice adds up. They build the habit of working on what actually needs attention instead of circling what already works. That is

where the shift happens, not in dramatic moments, but in small decisions that are repeated often enough to matter.

If you want to become a musician, it helps to bring the question down to something immediate. Instead of focusing on where you want to be months from now, ask what the musician you want to become would do today. Then do that, even if it feels small or unimpressive. Play the scale that needs work, write a few lines of the song, slow the rhythm down, and get it right. Those actions do not look impressive on their own, but over time, they build something real.

Eventually, those repeated actions turn into habits, and those habits shape your ability. Along the way, you also have to learn when to say no, and not just once. The musicians who keep moving forward tend to make the same few decisions again and again. They do not quit when the work becomes frustrating, they do not stay in the comfort of what they can already do, and they do not accept a level of effort that keeps them in the same place.

This Month in Music History — April

April 3, 1968 – Otis Redding hits No. 1 with "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," recorded just days before his death. Sometimes the most relaxed vocal ends up being the most powerful, which is a good reminder that pushing harder is not always the answer. Letting the song breathe often carries more weight.

April 4, 1964 – The Beatles hold the top five spots on the Billboard charts at the same time. All five. It's a

useful reminder that great songwriting is usually built on simple elements that are executed well: strong melody, clear rhythm, and chords that support both.

April 7, 1770 – Ludwig van Beethoven is baptized in Germany. His music still challenges musicians today, which says a lot about the level of control and discipline behind it. Even in contemporary styles, that same level of precision shows up in a different form.

April 10, 1927 – Louis Armstrong records with his Hot Seven, helping shape modern jazz improvisation. His playing makes it clear that personality matters as much as technique. You can play all the right notes and still fail to communicate anything meaningful.

April 14, 1986 – Metallica releases "Master of Puppets." Rhythm guitar at that level is physical and demanding, and it's built through repetition and control over time.

April 16, 1971 – The Rolling Stones release "Sticky Fingers," featuring "Brown Sugar" and "Wild Horses." What stands out is the groove, and that kind of feel is something a band develops together.

April 21, 2016 – Prince passes away, leaving behind a body of work that continues to influence musicians. His career is a strong example of what happens when someone develops multiple skills instead of relying on just one.



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A.J. Croce

Croce Plays Croce

by Liam Sweeny

The problem with being the son of an internationally celebrated musician, tragically cut short before his time, is that you'll face a lifetime of pressure to perform work that, in some cases, was literally made just for you.

A.J. Croce waited years, creating an impressive career of his own, before feeling he was ready to accept the responsibility of honoring his father's work. *Croce Plays Croce* is coming to Universal Preservation Hall on Thursday, April 9th at 7:30 pm.

RRX: You've created an experience called *Croce Plays Croce*, and you're gonna be at Universal Preservation Hall on April 9th. Can you let loose a teaser about this performance? What can people expect, and what might they be surprised by?

AJC: I grew up with my father's record collection. I was a piano player first and foremost, but along the way picked up guitar and was inspired by that music. And while it wasn't this vast collection, it was really deep, and I was able to get turned on, of course, to Ray Charles, who was kind of my gateway drug as a kid who couldn't see all of the Fats Waller and Bessie Smith and Mississippi John Hurt and Skip James and all of this amazing stuff. Soul music like Solomon Burke and Otis Redding and Sam Cooke and rock and roll. Little Richard. And it was everything you could want. Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley and lots of great folk music and great country music, and it was great. My father's career was really brief. It was 18 months of a professional music career, and before that, he

played other people's music. So I feel like it's really important to share some of that, because it really informs the audience about what inspired him. But also where his influences came from and consequently where my influences came from.

RRX: Which of your father's songs were the hardest to learn?

AJC: It is an interesting question. I think it was more about "hard," emotionally. Musically, as a piano player who started before I could walk, the forms are pretty simple to play on piano. Especially, you know, growing up playing stride and really complicated pieces. It was relatively simple, I think, compared to that. When I switched over to guitar, all of a sudden it became a bigger challenge, you know, because what might be

easy on piano for me is not on guitar. I think it's that the keyboard and fretboard are different in that way. There was absolutely a learning curve. Being a piano player, finger-style guitar really just resonated. It made perfect sense to me. That's how I started before picking up a flat pick or a thumb pick or anything like that. And so that was a great jumping-off point. I think that a song like "Time in a Bottle," which was written for me, was emotionally challenging. There are a couple of songs that have very personal stories that I know and that are personal, that are about my family. And I think in those situations, it was just a little hard to approach because they were really personal. I think otherwise it's pretty joyous. I think all of it is pretty joyous, and you can hear his influences

on all the character songs; it all comes out of rock and roll and R&B from the '50s. "Don't Mess Around with Jim" is like a Jimmy Reed song but with the lyrics of Leiber and Stoller. I think growing up on South Street before moving to the suburbs in Philadelphia really informed him musically because it was such a diverse community. You'd have opera in the Italian section, and Klezmer music, and you'd have rock and roll and R&B and jazz and gospel and all kinds of stuff. So, I think it was pretty clear where some of this stuff came from. "Rapid Roy," you can hear Chuck Berry influence, but again - those character songs - you can hear that Leiber and Stoller influence, the storytelling, the characters. He just does something a little different with it, in that he personalizes it.

RRX: You were very young when your father passed, so a lot of your learning of him came from his music. But then you also learned a lot about him from your family, because they were probably filling you in on stuff that you would have never known because of how young you were. How was it different what you learned from family and what you learned about him through his music?

AJC: We learn all different ways, you know. It can be tactile, it can be something that we perceive; it can be any number of our senses that can lead the way in how we learn emotionally and philosophically as well. Now, with my dad, I think I was really lucky to have all of these home recordings. Before he ever played a little bar, he would practice. He would practice songs he was going to perform, and it could be an audience that he was going to play more blues stuff for, more country stuff for. He might slip one of his own songs into the set, but it might only be one, and the rest of it could be all over the map depending on what it was. So I had a lot of these. And then whenever friends came over, he was also recording. So I had this wonderful kind of library of him with friends,

with fellow musicians, hearing his interaction about his ideas. I think he was recording it because certain friends were really funny, and he thought the conversations they would have would inspire a song. So he's always looking for a way to tell a story. I was the beneficiary of one of the greatest gifts you could have if you're not going to have the actual person in your life.

RRX: I think there are a lot of musicians starting out that actually fear success, and it holds them back, keeping them from taking a musical risk. How did you see this growing up? How did you feel about fear of success?

AJC: Letting the fear of success go. And when I say success, I mean in the way that I think the outside world thinks of success. To me, success is being able to do what I love for a living, whether I'm playing at a beautiful theatre or festival or playing a private party. I've done every kind of wedding and funeral you can imagine, and to me, that's success, being able to do what I love. But from the more outside perspective, I think that once you let go of that fear of the notoriety and celebrity ... you see there's these opportunities that come along that you didn't realise, or see in the same light. And so I think once I became comfortable with the idea that, yeah, part of what I'm doing, the whole point for most people is to be known. I think that it was always this idea of like, I don't want to sell out as an artist. You never want to sell out, right? Which is why I didn't ever play my dad's music. I didn't want to sell out. But then, when it came about for the right reasons, you know, and you're playing a venue, whatever size, what are you trying to do? You know, you're trying to sell out. Yeah, trying to sell out. So you really gotta decide how you feel about that stuff, because you can get in your own way a lot by worrying about things, instead of just enjoying the small triumphs that we have, you know, in this roller coaster of a life.



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Cannabis Corner

by MBF & 400 River

“It’s just a plant.”

We hear this all the time, and sure, cannabis is just a plant. The cannabis plant, however, is an exceptionally interesting one. It’s also a burgeoning new economy here in New York, now heading into its fourth year of legal existence. In our series of articles with Xperience, we hope to explore a little bit of everything cannabis, from the basics of growing, to what’s happening in the NY weed scene. Take a puff and let’s get started.

With this being the first article, let’s start with some random basics about cannabis from cultivation to consumption.

Let’s Grow

Growing a few cannabis plants is fun, totally legal in NY, and very rewarding. Cannabis can be grown outdoors for a natural and low cost approach. While not indigenous to NY, cannabis grows wonderfully here in the summer months. You can also grow indoors with regulated temperature, humidity and light. With a little time and effort, either way should result in some good bud.

Plants can be started from seed or clone. Seeds are the product of pollinated female plants. A clone is a branch cut off of a living plant. Once rooted, the clone will grow into a new plant that is genetically the same as the one it was cut from. Plants growing from seed will show a greater diversity in characteristics than plants grown from a clone.

Boys + Girls

Cannabis plants can be male,

female or hermaphrodites. Cultivators look for female plants, since those are the ones that will be producing precious buds. Male plants are generally used for breeding and seed production. Hermaphrodites possess both male and female characteristics. How to know the sex of your plant? If it has pollen sacs, it’s a boy. During the course of your grow, male and hermaphrodite plants should be disposed of so they don’t pollinate the female plants. (Sorry, boys!) Pollination results in a loss in potency and yield, and your weed will have seeds in it. Since pollen can travel miles, you might risk more than your crop. You can mitigate the risk of having male plants by buying feminized seeds or starting from a clone.

What to Consume?

Walk into any dispensary here in New York, and you are faced with a host of product choices. Flower and prerolls are naturally the cornerstones of the industry. Flower products will hit you the fastest, but are great for those just starting to dabble in cannabis. It’s easy to take a puff, feel the effect, then come back for more, if desired. Cannabis concentrates kick it up a notch. Rosin, resin and hash are some super potent elixirs that will hit fast and hard. Some concentrates like RSO are well-known for their therapeutic benefits. Edibles are perfect for accurate dosage. You know exactly how much THC you’re consuming with a 5mg gummy. Some edibles use a

water-based cannabis emulsion

that quickly absorbs into the body, others use cannabis oils that take longer to activate. There are also a lot of great drinks in the NY market now. If you’re hesitant to smoke, THC drinks are a tasty way to imbibe. Tinctures are great, especially if you’re looking for a discreet option. Mints and tablets are also an option. As the NY market continues to evolve, I’m expecting to see more really interesting products emerge.

Indica vs. Sativa vs. I need the highest THC possible

When choosing cannabis flower, there are generally two things customers look at: Strain type and THC percentage. Cannabis is usually categorized as either indica, sativa, or a hybrid. (I’m sure a lot of folks will recognize the saying “Indica in da couch” as a way to remember which is which.) Indicas are said to offer a more relaxing body high, whereas sativas offer a more energizing, cerebral high. Hybrids blend the best of both worlds. THC percentage is another huge factor in what a customer tends to purchase. A higher THC % will generally perform better on the market than a low THC product. ‘Tis the way of the world-for now.

The above is definitely the most widespread way of describing the hoped-for effects of cannabis but some different factors are becoming more talked about. Some cultivators or dispensaries enjoy highlighting the main terpenes in a strain of cannabis. Terpenes (aka terps) are essential oil compounds that not only impact the taste of the weed, but the

effects it has on your body. Terps like limonene and pinene smell like (you guessed it!) lemon and pine and have energizing effects on the body. Linalool, also found in lavender, and myrcene, also in hops, tend to provide a more calm experience. Studies are now showing that THC and other cannabinoids, terpenes, flavonoids, alkaloids and other substances in cannabis create the “entourage effect.” The entourage effect is the sum of all of the parts of the cannabis plant acting together on your body and it has a marked impact on your smoking journey.

Let’s not forget either that indica and sativa are botanical terms that are used to describe cannabis plants and their structure. Sativa plants are long, lanky units that produce tiny buds and take a long time to mature. They grow in warm climates like southeast Asia and Africa. Indica plants are big, bushy trees that have wide leaves and heavy buds coming from places like India.

It’s 420 somewhere,
Alison

Alison is Director of Operations at Misty Bleu Farm and 400 River Dispensary in Troy. She’s been operating in NY’s legal cannabis market since the start and excited to help New York Xperience the best of cannabis. Email any topics for discussion to alison@mbfarmcannabis.com. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Jim Florentine

by Skye Rickman



Jim Florentine. Photo provided.

RRX: You've been a comedian for many years. How do you come up with new material?

Jim Florentine: I just talk about everything. Day-to-day life, stuff like that. Sometimes I share old stories. That's the fun of it. You see what works and try to make it funny.

RRX: You were on "That Metal Show" for many years. What were some of your favorite moments?

JF: All of it was great. So many amazing guests. The guys from Sabbath, Marilyn Manson. I enjoyed every show.

RRX: Do you wish the show could have continued, either on TV or in podcast form? Or were you ready to turn a new chapter?

JF: It would have been great if it continued, but we were on for eight years, 14 seasons. Every year, it felt good to get another year. Just like "Seinfeld" and "The Sopranos," though, every show comes to an end.

RRX: If you could work with anyone that you haven't worked with, who

would it be and why?

JF: Sydney Sweeney. I don't know what we would do, but I'd like to work with her.

RRX: Who gave you the best comedy advice?

JF: Andrew Dice Clay. He's the reason I started doing comedy shows. He told me don't worry what anyone else thinks. Don't worry about what other comedians are doing. Just do your own thing.

RRX: Last question, and thank you again for your time. I appreciate you. What kind of legacy do you want to leave?

JF: I'm not really worried about that stuff. Sometimes people discover you years later, so who knows. I don't know how to answer that.

RRX: I know you will be memorable, because I grew up as a teenager watching your show, and I'm still a fan twenty years later. I know your comedy will have an impact on generations.

Thank you again for the interview.

JF: Thank you for having me.

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Tommy Stinson. Photo provided.

Tommy Stinson

by Rob Smittix

RRX: Alright, so right before we started recording, you said that you got a deer whistle in the mail. What's that?

Tommy Stinson: Oh yeah, my daughter ... the kiddo has been driving home in rural Columbia County late at night and hit a deer four different times. Strange stuff. I don't quite understand how it's possible four times, but I have a remedy in the form of a whistle! Apparently.

RRX: I didn't even know that existed.

TS: Yeah, you put them on your bumper, or you can hide them in different places that catch wind. But they sound like this: (blows whistle). They sound like that, but they're quiet enough, I guess ... that the deer hear them and we don't.

RRX: That's awesome. Yeah, everyone in rural Columbia County should have one of those.

TS: That's kind of what I'm thinking. They're only a couple bucks on the f**ing old Amazon.

RRX: That's right. I've never hit a

deer, but I've had a couple hit me.

TS: That's basically what my daughter says - they keep hitting her. She's not actually hitting them, but they've taken out her door a couple times.

RRX: That's why I don't necessarily believe in evolution because they're not getting smarter.

TS: No.

RRX: So it's crazy that a guy like you has over 40 years of a music career already because mathematically, you don't seem old enough to have that. But then I read where you started playing at 11 or 12 or something?

TS: I did. It's a funny thing, I was watching my kiddo play her performance for school last week, and I'm thinking ... man, when I was playing baritone sax in 9th grade, it must have been 1978 or 1979, somewhere in there. I've been doing this for a long time. I dropped out of high school in the middle of 10th grade to go on the road with the Replacements; that was kind of my whole deal. My mom signed off on it because ... before that, all I was really

doing was getting into a lot of trouble. Before I learned how to play bass, that is. My brother taught me how to play bass when I was 11 or 12 years old. Before he showed me how to play bass, he'd been gone for a while, and I was getting in so much trouble. I'd gotten arrested like three times before I even turned 11, and my Mom was kind of over it. Like, I don't know what to do with you, you're in a bad spot. Once he showed me how to play bass, it got me focused on something positive, and there you go! That's how it happened.

RRX: Wow! And to hit the road at such an early age, what was that like? Because even I know from playing out with my band, when younger bands would open up for us, very often they wouldn't be let into the club until it was time for them to get on stage, and they'd have to leave right after their set.

TS: I had a good amount of that going on. The Longhorn (Jay's Longhorn Bar) in Minneapolis made me sit in the kitchen for a bit, which was funny, but I did it just to play a gig. Sporadically, out on the road, there'd be a club here

and there that wouldn't let me play, but for the most part, I got away with it. Got my first fake ID when I was probably, I don't know ... 17, right? In Manhattan, New York City, actually right in Times Square, in fact.

RRX: Wow, you can't get one of those these days. I think they made it impossible for today's kids.

TS: Well, you can get them, but you have to be a dumb ass to not know it's fake.

RRX: Exactly.

TS: I've heard all the tales from younger folks who have tried it, and it always gets taken away from them.

RRX: On one hand, I feel bad for kids these days to not have had these experiences like we did. On the other hand, I feel a sigh of relief that our kids didn't have these experiences.

TS: I'm lucky, my kid tells me everything and tells me if she's had a beverage with alcohol or something at a party. She doesn't drive herself home. She always has a designated driver if they think they're gonna be partaking in something. Not that it's something

that you want them to be doing, but you know they're gonna try it somewhere probably, and it's better to be safe at it. At least the door is open, and we can talk about it. She surely knows the pros and cons of what can happen with that stuff.

RRX: That's good stuff. It's great to have that kind of relationship with your child. I've got an 18-year-old as well. He's been playing guitar way better than I ever did in such a short amount of time. I don't know how he does it, but then again, he's skipping school every other day.

TS: So yeah, there's the pro and con of that! The only thing that I had going for me to be able to make sense of skipping school was that I was able to go out and make money at a young age. Not like we were making a lot of money by any stretch of the imagination, but it was enough to make my mom think that I might have a future at this. It beats the hell out of me stealing stuff or

whatever.

RRX: It's definitely a wonderful thing to even be able to do this. As you know, there are thousands upon thousands of musicians out there that cannot do it for a living. Maybe it's just a weekend gig. I mean ... I wouldn't say it for you, but it sounds like you've lived out your dream and you're still doing it.

TS: I'm lucky like that. I'm grateful for all of it and don't have any complaints about it, except that it's a hard living. There's nothing easy about it, but I chose it, it chose me, and here I am still doing it at almost 60. So there you go.

RRX: That's awesome. And you've built quite the resume, so many notable acts that you've been with and played with over the years. Bash and Pop, GNR, and of course the Replacements, to name a few. But I didn't know that you did a stint with Soul Asylum.

TS: Yeah, you know? When Karl Mueller died, I guess he had left a list

of people he would want to replace him if they were gonna go on without him. His wife was an old girlfriend of mine from back in the day, and I was approached about it basically under that premise, of this is what Karl wanted. So I said, well, sure, I could do that for a while. GNR wasn't touring a whole lot at that particular juncture, so they kind of booked around me, and it worked out good, it was fun.

RRX: That's what's up! Now, out of all these different experiences that you've had over the years, anything come to mind that you would want to share with people?

TS: Nothing in particular, other than I've had a really good run of it. I've had fun playing with some of my heroes and some really great people out there. The only thing I could say really is, it's a lot of fun if you get into it, and it becomes a part of you, like it has become for me. There's nothing easy

about it, but it can be really gratifying and a lot of fun. I work with kids, youthful people, at times with different records that I produced and all that. It's fun to see others going through it, whether they do it on the side or if they actually do it as their main gig, or if they wanna approach it as something they wanna do forever kind of thing. It's cool to see the torch be passed on, if you will.

RRX: You mentioned production, and a while back, when you were working on the album with Candy Ambulance, they were super stoked to be working with you.

TS: Oh yeah, I love those guys.
RRX: Yeah, me too. Was there anything that you wanted to say that maybe I didn't bring up, or a message that you'd like to get out there to the world?

TS: No, not really, just support the arts. We're gonna need it!

RRX: Yeah, you ain't kidding.

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Matt Smith

by Rob Smittix

Matt Smith: First of all, I want to thank you for doing this. Obviously, I grew up there (Capital Region), and that's my home. That's where I came up, and it's beautiful to get some love.

RRX: I heard that you're originally from the area. Where did you actually grow up?

MS: I grew up in Clifton Park, and I went to Shenendehowa High School. I came up playing my own stuff, and then I was one of the founders of Interstate. Then I played with E.B. Jeb for a while. I guess it was 1988, I started playing my own music (the Matt Smith Band), and I lived there 'til like '94. Then I went to New York City and lived there, but still came back all the time to play. I lived there until 2009, then I moved to Austin, and I've been here ever since.

RRX: Well, Austin's quite the music town these days.

MS: I have a place here called 6 String Ranch. It's kind of like a mentorship place for artists coming up and a recording studio. We have video channels and stuff like that. But that's what I've been up to for a long time now.

RRX: Awesome, and I see you put out your 20th album on the 1st of the year?

MS: Yeah, that's right.

RRX: So that means you've definitely been around for a while.

MS: Well, I'm 66 now, and I've been doing it since I was 10, and I've never done anything else. I have to say, a lot of the stuff that really inspired me was the music scene in Upstate New York. When I was coming up, we had places like the Skyway and Allen's and places like that. Back then, you could still go out at 18. So places like that would have these amazing bands that

were from all the upstate corridors; bands like Talas (Billy Sheehan's old band), the New York Flyers, 805, and Heartbeat. Bands like that set the bar for us. Like wow, you could either suck your thumb in a fetal position or get with it.

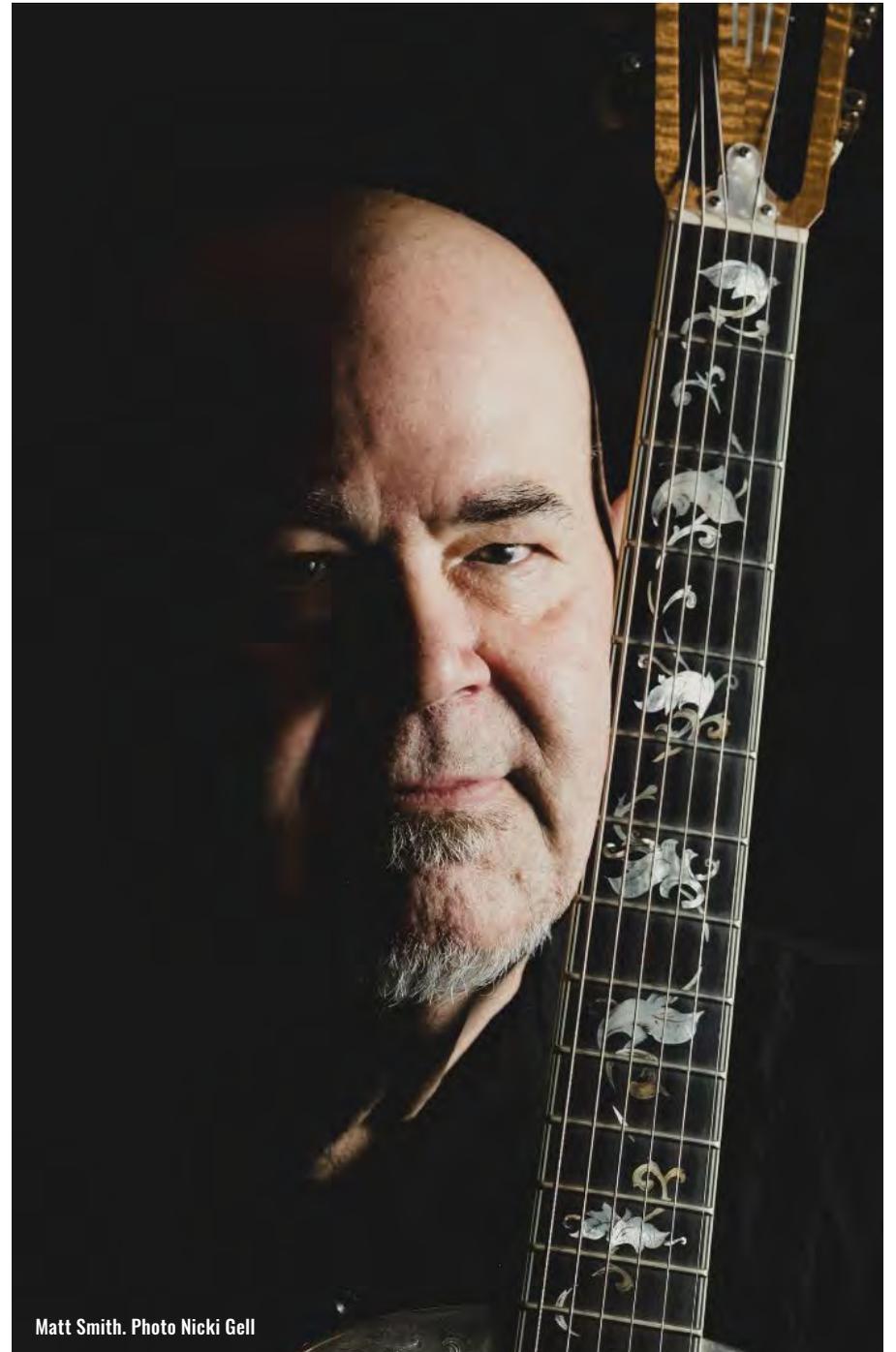
RRX: I've heard so many stories, and I mean ... I'm 47. The nineties were really when I started to be able to enjoy anything, but the scene was still pretty good, and we've still got one. Still loads of bands around here, but the stories I heard from the generation before about all these places like JB Scott's and others that used to exist. It makes me wish I were born just a little bit earlier.

MS: I come up at least a couple times a year, still to this day, every year, because I still have the band up in Saratoga, the guys who I grew up with. I actually have an album coming out this summer, of 35 years of playing live, and there's a ton of performances from clubs in the Capital District. Different bands that I played with over the years, while playing my own music. That's the next one that's on the plate. It's pretty much already done, but I wanted to honor those guys who are all truly amazing musicians. They're all still very active and playing in different bands up there. Like Pete Sweeney, Chris Peck, Tony Perrino, Brian Melick, and Charlie Tokarz, all those guys who I've been playing with since probably 1993.

RRX: Wow!

MS: My roots are still very deep there, even though Austin is my home now, and that's where I live. But that's where I come from, and I've always honored that.

RRX: No, Austin's definitely the move as far as music goes. I know they got South by Southwest, but I have mixed emotions



Matt Smith. Photo Nicki Gell

about that because they make you pay to apply to play.

MS: Oh no, it really is probably the biggest scam I've ever seen. Really. Let me qualify that for you because people come in ... not just guys from New York, but people come in from like Turkey, you know? If they give them like 200 bucks, they don't guarantee any kind of crowd is gonna watch it. The important thing to

understand is there's like 12,000 musicians living in Austin, and at least 2500 bands that live here. Then you bring in another 1500 bands on top of that. So there's 4000 bands in town that week, all doing multiple shows. If you're a consumer of music, there's a band in a vacant lot over here, there's a band in the grocery store, there's a band in the airport (of course, there always is in Austin). I love this town,

but it's also hard for musicians now coming up. It was always hard in our business, but as far as South by Southwest now, I think a lot of what's happening is the bands that get attention during South by Southwest are already getting attention.

RRX: Correct! My friends are going down there, playing a bar with three people in it, because everybody's at the other shows.

MS: It's a little overwhelming and oversaturated, but this is what I've been blessed to have been able to do my whole life and somehow get away with it. You know what I mean? I love everything about it, same thing as you. You obviously have a deep passion for this, or you wouldn't do what you're doing.

RRX: Oh yeah, and being in the radio business since '94, I had to take a long break because I couldn't even make a living doing it for a while. I can finally do it for a living again.

MS: We have a saying in the music industry, especially on our side of it ... you too can make hundreds or even tens of dollars in the music industry over a few short decades.

RRX: That's correct.

MS: That was a quote from my friend Jimmy Kelly. My newest record has a lot of Capital District guys on it. Steve Candlen, who I co-wrote the song "Orphans" with, also played on that. And also Jimmy Kelly co-wrote "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" with me. I had him play the drums and sing on that with me, too. I recorded a lot of those tracks at Tony's studio up there. The last record I did up there was my "Into the Light" record, which I recorded half with my New York State band in Tony's studio and half in my studio in Austin with my band that I play with down here. Like I said, that connection is never broken. It's never broken my entire career.

RRX: Honestly, I listened to the album, but I had no idea just how much of a connection you had to this area besides the fact that you lived here previously. You know ... people are gonna read this and say, oh man, we gotta check out his new

album.

MS: Well, the new album ... I just want to say a few words about it. I'm a centrist Democrat. All of my music for many years has contained social consciousness issues within it. I'm deeply concerned about where we are now in the division within our society and in our country. So I had to address that on this new record. I rewrote "America the Beautiful" on July 4th. There's a song on there called "Cry for America," and on July 4th, I sat behind my studio, and I rewrote it because I was horrified by the things I was seeing. Then I brought in all these great Austin singers. I sang the whole song, and then I brought in Black, Hispanic, Jewish, Arab, and all these different singers to come in. I had them all sing the whole song, and then I edited each line for each singer, so that it had this weight to it. I started in June, and the album was done and mixed by November. I wrote all the songs one after another. It was a tremendously deep thing for me. Not only that, but I was also dealing with the death of my parents. That's the song I co-wrote with Steve called "Orphans," and it's about a certain point in life, where we all become orphans. But that's part of the circle of life, and it's beautiful, you know? So there's a lot of very philosophical and very deep emotional connection with that, and a lot of that part of my life comes from my connection there. That's why I was really excited to talk to you about this and to talk to the people who I grew up with.

RRX: I appreciate our conversation; it was great connecting with you. Was there anything I didn't cover or ask about that you would like to say?

MS: What I would love people to do is to understand that my album is an album of trying to help heal rifts in society while still maintaining integrity in my own thoughts.

RRX: I love that. I've been listening to it, and I agree.

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Dave Pirner (cont.)

Continued from 5.

his hometown music alumni.) I've got a couple of weird questions. First ... it's 1984. Battle of the bands. The final two are The Replacements and Hüsker Dü. Who is taking home the trophy?

DP: Well, the first time I ever won an award for music, I gave a speech saying music is not sports, and we shouldn't get trophies for competing with other musical entities. The "battle of the bands" seems kind of oxymoronic to me. I know why you're asking me that, and it's an impossible question to answer. I mean, Tommy Stinson played in Soul Asylum for a while ... Bob Mould produced our first record. I love all those guys. They are all connected. I've known them since I was 18, so that's an impossible question.

RRX: I knew that, so fair enough. Another one: Did Prince have the greatest Super Bowl halftime show ever?

DP: I just read about that again somewhere ... I think somewhere in the swarm around this recent half-time show. Prince has always been a presence in Minneapolis. At first, he was kind of what the antithesis of what the punk rock crowd was about. Prince was too sexy. When you're in a dirty, filthy punk rock band that hates keyboards and drum machines and hates dressing up and all that kind of stuff ... it took me a really long time to appreciate Prince. But then he covered one of my songs, and I was like ... okay. He's completely won me over. I thought that the performance was great. I'm not positive that it would be considered the greatest ever had it not started to rain during "Purple Rain." I think that put it over the top. Maybe it was one of the greatest ever.

RRX: A couple of fan questions. Damien asks if a new album is coming out.

DP: Yes. We're working on new material now. I can kind of visualize the album and which songs are working best, so yeah — it's in the oven.

RRX: Someone also said you had the coolest hair in rock and roll.

DP: I'll take that.

RRX: Todd asks if you are looking for a bass player, and Josh mentioned your cameo in "Reality Bites."

DP: No. But "Reality Bites" was a fun thing, and there was no pressure at all. I was basically just sitting on a bed while my friend Janeane Garofalo was talking. They didn't give me a line ... they just said, "Say something," so I just made something up. (He laughs) I didn't even get credit for that!

RRX: Laura asked if you'd be writing any songs about current events like "Misery."

DP: I've already done it. In fact, my guitar player recently asked me, "Is this about the s*** that happened the other day?" Minneapolis has been a hotbed for a lot of things lately, and some of that ends up reflected in the songs. You start with George Floyd and end up with Renee Good, and there is just a bunch of messed-up stuff happening.

RRX: Charlie asks if you can teleport us back to 1994. On that ... how do you see the music world now compared to when Soul Asylum first came up?

DP: Here's another word of the day. The caveat (if I'm using that word correctly) is the internet. Soul Asylum's GENESIS (laughs again) started before that. That's three! The caveat was, how much was I going to give myself up to it? I still don't even have an email address. But the important things haven't changed. People still go out to see live music, and that's what matters. I can still go see a jazz band. It's still there if you know where to find it. I have a huge vinyl collection. I can still listen to records. No one can take that away from me. I have embraced computers and Pro Tools in the studio. I used to have a garage-sized room to store analog tapes. I just went to "the nerd center" and bought a 2TB drive that I'm worried is going to be lost in my pocket.

There's a trade-off. There are choices. The durable things that haven't changed are what I rely on. Going to Saratoga Springs and playing? The internet hasn't changed that at all. Thank goodness people still get out of the house and are around live music and do things that sometimes do seem threatened.

RRX: Tim asks why you chose a Telecaster as your main guitar. Did any other guitar ever make you rethink that? **DP:** It's what an electric guitar sounds like to me. When I was in junior high, I had a picture of Keith Richards playing one. That was the first electric guitar I ever got, and I've had several ever since. I've become familiar with the sound of a Les Paul, so in the studio, I might grab one of those or something else, but live, I'm not switching guitars every song. That's below my pay grade.

RRX: After decades with Soul Asylum, what still keeps it exciting to get on stage every night?

DP: Just making music. When I was a kid playing in a youth symphony orchestra, I remember the feeling of being part of something bigger. It was a childhood revelation. When you're playing with other people, it's completely different than playing by yourself. That feeling never really goes away. I can sit in my basement and play by myself, but when you are part of an ensemble, it takes on a whole new meaning. Now we're making music and having fun.

RRX: Dave, thank you so much for taking the time today. I'm looking forward to an awesome show when you come away.

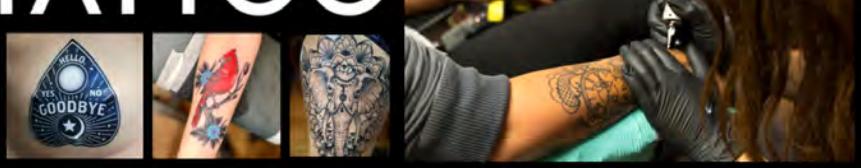
DP: Alright, my man. Take it easy.

Band info: soulasylum.com. Show info: atuph.org.

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3 Questions with Hans Storsberg

by Rob Skane



Hans Storsberg. Photo provided.

Hans Storsberg is, without a doubt, one of the most incredible guitar players I have ever had the pleasure of listening to. You might feel the same way once you hear his music. The arrangements are sophisticated and melodic. His singing is absolutely enchanting, and he writes about real life. Please find him at hansstorsberg.com.

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

Hans Storsberg: I first picked up the guitar because my school teachers encouraged me to get more involved in music. My father was a musician as well, and I loved singing with him. They asked what instrument I would like to learn, and I picked guitar. I could not have been any luckier than starting lessons with local icon Carmen Caramanica.

I was hooked.

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

HS: If I could give advice to myself when I first started, it would be practice, practice, and listen. Embrace the challenges and don't just play things that come easily. Ultimately, put it all together, have fun, and make music and songs.

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

HS: When I am not recording or playing, I listen a lot to the classics along with classical music. I have written more pop songs inspired by Bach than anything else. Not even sure why, but it makes me love the process and puts me in a place where it just feels clean and pure.

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Prog Digest

by Klyde Kadiddlehumper

Decidedly, we've not recently had any Hot Fun in the Summertime – but we have been able to Dance to the Music.

Once again, circumstances, music, and other little bits have all been put in the cosmic blender that keeps things fresh in Klyde's head. Here's how this one goes.

For folks of an age, the songs up front are a small representation of one of the most progressive, funky, soulful, psychedelic, and ultimately self-destructive forces in music.

Sly and the Family Stone.

Famed San Francisco Chronicle music critic Joel Selvin once wrote that “there are two types of black music: black music before Sly Stone, and black music after Sly Stone”. Perhaps more true words have never been written.

Starting out as a gospel singer, Sly recorded and released a local 78 single with his siblings Freddie, Rose, and Loretta under their given name, “The Stewart Four.” It was the foundation of not only a music career but also his writing as a profound lyricist.

The amalgamation of his band, Sly & the Stoners, and brother Freddie's band, Freddie & the Stone Souls, became Sly Brothers and Sisters ... then Sly & the Family Stone.

The first major American integrated band. Male, female, black, white.

Sometimes I'm right and I can be wrong

My own beliefs are in my song

The butcher, the banker, the drummer and then

Makes no difference what group I'm in

I am everyday people, yeah, yeah

The band broke up for the usual rock and roll reasons. Squabbles, drugs, etc.

Now, while this may seem a bit out of the blue, there is, as always, sometimes, perhaps, maybe rhyme and reason to Klyde and these bits of ink.

Many years ago, early on in the beginnings of Xperience Monthly, Dick Beach interviewed Felicia Collins from the Lettermen Band on CBS. Klyde caught the notice that she was doing Sly & the Family Stone Greatest Hits (and more) on a Wednesday night in NYC.

Hooky was played, train tickets bought, room booked, and Constant Companion and I were off. Dinner in Koreatown, show at The Cutting Room. Hot damn.

The room - packed.

The guest list – Paul Shaffer, Chris Knowles, Valerie Simpson, Cyndi Lauper, and, most importantly, Felicia's mom.

Felicia and the Throwdown killed. The music was awesome. The stories - better.

A late '60s/early '70s love fest. I mean, how many of us wore out at least one, if not more, copies of Sly's Greatest Hits?

Turn on, Tune in, Drop out.

Free love. You know, free as in beer. Free as a bird.

Free as in Xperience Monthly – where we believe if there is a membership fee, it's a club, and we don't want to join. Besides, then the paperwork gets even messier than running a regular business. Oh, and just how into the weeds do you want to go? The only weeds we want any part of are the kind you pick the stems and seeds out of and smoke. There is now a field where a small third-world country once was, that Klyde smoked up in the '70s ... but I digress.

How'd we get here? Somehow, it seems that now is a time we ought to think about what Sly had to say.

He was right. We are just Everyday

People, Dancin' to the Music, and I Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Again).

Maybe we ought to turn down the noise and rhetoric, tune into peace, love and understanding (what's so funny

'bout?). Cause Sly was right in 1971 when he released “There's a Riot Goin' On.”

Until next time.

Klyde



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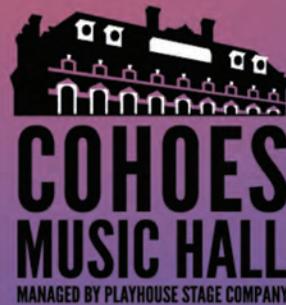


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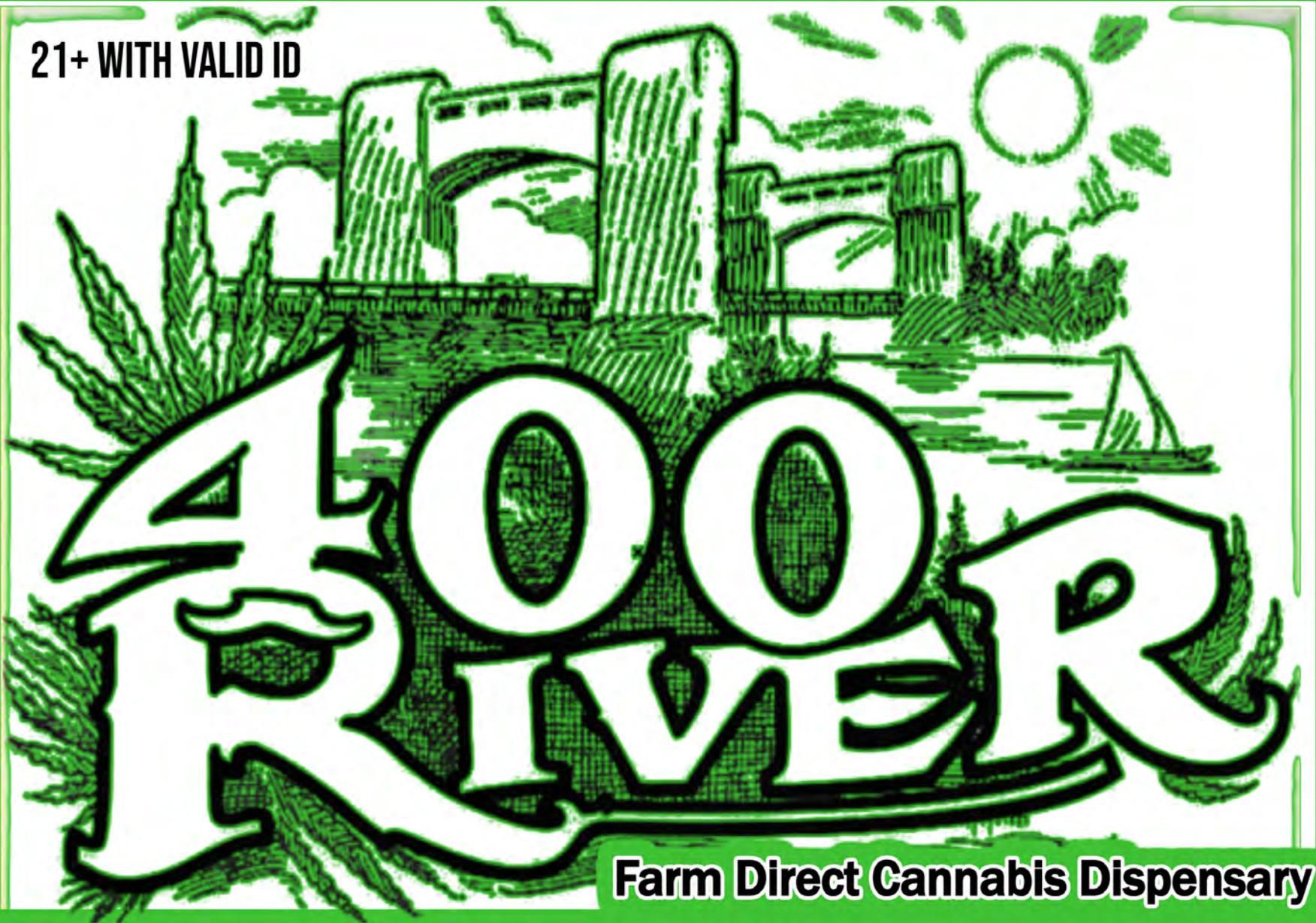
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