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Plugging In the Unplugged

When 12-strings, mandolins, violins and MOOG Minitherimins attack: Acoustic Trauma and its neverending quest to redefine the words 'Acoustic' and 'Trauma'



■ (l - r) Patrick McNulty, Paul Nunzio Maceli

Photo by Jessica Maceli

By Liam Sweeney

When I was jamming out, my sound stage wishes and wah pedal dreams in tow, I'd heard of Acoustic Trauma. I'd never seen them, but I'd heard a bootleg tape, so I knew what they were laying down. That was in the late 90s, and Acoustic Trauma has been laying it long since I laid my guitar to rest.

With Patrick McNulty on bass, Jason Ellenbogen on drums, and Paul Nunzio Maceli on... well,

a little bit of everything else, Acoustic Trauma has been blowing minds from the cradle to the cap and gown.

I sit with Paul to mull over the finer points of interstellar traffic law.

RRX: You really push the envelope when it comes to an acoustic sound. In fact, I don't think many people hearing you for the first time would have the word 'acoustic' as first choice - there's so much more in the sound. When you started jamming out, maybe pre- '97, did you

see yourself as an acoustic set, or was that a crown given?

Paul: It's actually an interesting story. To give you some background, my early influences included classic rock, mostly progressive rock and heavy metal. In my teen years, I quit playing music to go to college for business, knowing that the only way I would ever get back into music was if I was to do something original that no one else was doing. Fast-forward to my twenties, in the midst of trying to find a

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hobby better than my unhealthy barhopping, I was hanging out at my apartment with my Uncle Peter (bassist at the time of the funk rap band Shootyz Groove) showing off a 12-string acoustic guitar that I just purchased. I started banging away on it as if it was an electric guitar and he said to me “hey, you’re playing that thing like it’s an electric guitar! You’re not supposed to do that!” I asked “does it sound good?” and he said, “Yeah! It’s different!” So, that started the wheels moving in my head because in the 1990s, the only thing you heard from anyone with an acoustic guitar in their hand was an “unplugged” version of a rockin’ song or a sweet little

folk tune that everyone already loved. No one was plugging an acoustic guitar into an amplifier and putting it through effect pedals and turning it up, let alone having the nerve to jump in front of a kick ass bass/drum rhythm section to blow people away. That sound was right up my alley! That also happened to be around the same time that Eric Clapton had released the unplugged version of his energetic 70’s hit “Layla.” The electric version of “Layla” was one of my favorite songs of all time and when I heard it all toned down and quiet, I wanted to puke into my shirt! Especially after what I felt I had just discovered about the energy of the acoustic guitar. “No! You can’t do that! You don’t have to sit down and ruin

that song!” I thought to myself. Of course, I didn’t worry about it because I thought it would be a stinker, but lo and behold: it was a hit! In addition, it had become a trend and EVERYONE began unplugging their songs! Now I was on a mission to defy the masses and alas, in 1996, I was back playing music again. By 1998, I had incorporated the violin into the mix and then the mandolin. As of lately, I also whip out the MOOG Theremini (modeled after the MOOG Theremin) because it’s just so much fun! Plus it’s different. I mean, how many people do you see jamming on a Theremin on a rock and roll stage?

RRX: When I heard the instruments you all play, I would’ve expected an atmospheric kind of music, but that’s really not what you guys are laying down. Less a misty morning, more a tempest. Is that why you guys named yourselves Acoustic Trauma? Is it a cool name or a warning label?

Paul: Ha! It’s both! The name serves as a definitive pun because even though the lead instruments are acoustic, they are plugged into a powerful amplifier to keep up with the drums and electric

bass guitar. It can get pretty loud and the term “acoustic trauma” describes damage done to the ear as a result of loud sounds. I thought it was pretty smart.

RRX: I have a good sense of what you’re playing in your songs, instrument-wise, but it’s a sense – I could be way off. I think anyone just hearing you on the radio or on their laptop or phone might want to know, so would you mind giving us a sneak peak of your ingredients list? What instruments go into an ‘Acoustic Trauma’ jambalaya?

Paul: The Acoustic Trauma jambalaya consists of a drum kit (always played by a rockin’ drummer), a driving but funky bass guitar, and depending on the song, I am proud to be the chef that decides whether a violin, acoustic guitar, mandolin, and/or MOOG Theremini is the lead meat of the song. Sprinkle a little vocal expression over that and voila: the delicious power trio known as Acoustic Trauma!

RRX: AT has been on scene since ’97, so twenty-two years. So you’ve had a chance to see the local music scene evolve, and yourselves along with it. Have you all



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Xperience Monthly

Published by Imperial Broadcasting in conjunction with
RadioradioX.com.

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Phone: (518) 326-1673

ever had to take a year or two off in all that time? Have you ever had a chance to be surprised by something happening to the 518 scene?

Paul: There is so much talent in the area, as well as people who are warriors of promoting the arts. Like the X, for example. What you guys are doing to support the independent arts is what keeps a scene like this going. It's humbling and I know that we appreciate it! That's the surprise: there are always people who care about and cherish artistic creativity. From venues to bars to special events to charities, there is a support for the local arts.

It has been an interesting journey throughout the years in the 518. When AT started, the big deal was making a CD and getting your songs played on the radio, even if it was just on the local half-hour show. We had radio stations supporting local bands and that was really cool. They made us feel like rock stars. Then there was the regional television show Sounding Board, which showcased a different local band each week. That was before YouTube, so it came with the excitement of performing in a television studio, as well as seeing yourself on TV. That was a wonderful support vehicle. Plus, I watched it all the time just to check out the other bands. Of course, there was Metroland Magazine, Times Union, and other publications that would write bands up, their CDs and live shows. It was like having our own local Rolling Stone and Village Voice and everyone wanted to be written up in there. But then the

internet came along and changed everything. There are websites to show off music, photos and where we play out. We could get more exposure on YouTube and you can share whose videos on your social media, which is where most people are on these days. There is easy access to get music and information on a band now.

RRX: A long time ago, I heard about the Trauma House. Whispers, really, maybe legends when we kicked the bottom shelf stuff. You also have a live album from the Trauma House. So, the fire's going, and the legend is yours to tell; what was, or is, the Trauma House?

Paul: The Trauma House is pretty much my house and Acoustic Trauma headquarters for practicing, writing, hanging and house parties, thus the name "The Trauma House." At first I didn't like the way the name

rang but everyone seemed pretty comfortable calling it that after the first private party, so the name just stuck. We pretty much had our own live venue with full lights, fog, sound and people! Our friends and fans always came to those. It was wonderful! It became such an event, that we decided to record our live CD/DVD there. As for the "legendary" stuff...I'm saving that for the book. As of current, we had a party in 2018 and I am happy to say that if things line up they way we want, there will more of them.

Acoustic Trauma will be performing at the Flyday Music Festival at the Blackthorne Resort in East Durham, NY, May 17th - 18th.

To read the full article, please visit radiatorradiox.com and click on the 'Xperience' tab.



Photo by Jessica Maceli

■ Acoustic Trauma seeks to redefine the acoustic sound.

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Iron Maiden -The Trooper

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Sharon Jones and The Dap Kings- Searching for a New Day

Kongos- Come with Me Now

Hayes Carll- Days Like These

Hamish Anderson -Breaking Down

Freddie Scott- You Got What I Need

Urge Overkill- Sister Havana

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Tracy Bonham- Mother Mother

Smashing Pumpkins- Today

Tori Amos- Smells Like Teen Spirit

Deap Vally- Baby I Call Hell

Aerosmith- Same Old Song and Dance

Subversion From an Early 80s Cable Box

Focus Points: Buzz Magazine, Real George's Back Room, and Hypnosis - with Artist George Guarino

By Debora Bump

In the mid'80's, BUZZ MAGAZINE graced the counters of local establishments, fostering the local arts/music scene alongside national acts. Musicians anticipated their photos and reviews, while nascent writers looked for bylines. Real George's Back Room was the companion animal to Buzz, a widely viewed cable access show, on the same premise. Several episodes have recently found their way onto YouTube. The man behind the subcultural magic, George Guarino, eventually transitioned to another career path. A licensed hypnotist, he is particularly passionate about a self branded trance technique, called "Pic-trance", which incorporates art into the hypnotic process. I met with George recently at one of his office locations, to learn of the segue from the world of the sub-cultural, to that of the seemingly mysterious subconscious.

RRX: You recently uploaded episodes of Real George's Back Room onto YouTube. What inspired this?

George: People had been



Photo Provided

George Guarino harnessed the power of videorecording live music when MTV was getting it's butt slapped in the delivery room.

asking me about it for a long time, and part of my inspiration was that you had made a comment, on one of my Facebook pages. You asked if I still had old Buzzes, talking about the old days. Other people had been wanting to see some episodes; it was the day or two, of that big snowstorm. I made an effort that day, to lock myself up, and put a few episodes online.

RRX: I think people are going to be really happy to see them!

George: Particularly the people that are in these bands; I did think of myself as documenting these times. I really felt like somehow we wanted to put

Albany on the map, that there was something special happening here.

RRX: I'd say you did just that.

George: At least it's documented. I really thought it was going to go further, but it has to do with the people and bands that were here.

RRX: What year did Real George's Back Room take off?

George: I got a camcorder in the middle of '81, then learned about the public access channels in Rensselaer and Schenectady. I was interested in bands, and was in bands with my brothers. I really loved Fear of Strangers; I admired them. I really wanted to be

a part of this in some way. So by videotaping them, I felt like I was helping in some way, that I could be part of their world. That was the genesis of the television show. It was really out of wanting to have a place within this focus of music, particularly original music in the Albany area.

RRX: Where was it shown, what areas?

George: I would produce my show through Schenectady Public Access, then take it physically to the facility in Albany, then Rensselaer; basically those three areas.

RRX: It was quite popular, I remember.

George: I liked that it was coming into people's homes; cable had just started. '81 was when MTV started, my show came about then as well. The interesting thing was, once people finally made videos for MTV, there wasn't a lot of other places to play them. I would let people know that Albany had a place to play their videos, and if you watched the shows, you would see that I have videos that weren't played in a lot of other places, plus the normal ones you would see, like Michael Jackson, which I didn't put on my show.

RRX: How long did Real George's Back Room run for?

George: The show was on from the end of '81, to about '95.

RRX: So Buzz Magazine came after Real George's Back Room?

George: The first versions of it were just one piece of paper folded in half, that I mailed to publicize the tv show; this morphed into a few pieces of paper stapled together, like a booklet. 1985 is when I had the first news print.

RRX: So the original ones are probably collectible!

George: People contact me once in awhile; people who were in the bands. To them, it's very valuable. Some have passed away, and there are people who have had kids. I want to get the shows out while people are still alive and care about it to some degree. I wish I had done it sooner, because people have passed away. The two that I think about are Billy Harrigan, from Operation Pluto, and The Dronez. Also Shaq, from The Outpatients. Some of the shows I have up now,

one at The Chateau, have Shaq in them.

RRX: Real George's Back Room was just a little before my time. The first video I ever saw on the show was "Stigmata".

George: Stigmata! Oh yes, Ministry! (Laughs)

RRX: I was amazed, it was when I realized there was a completely different world of music out there!

George: In the beginning, there weren't a lot of music videos, because MTV was the only place to play them. Network television didn't. There were three channels and public television. I would have shows weekly. The nice thing about cable is you could have the same show run repeatedly. The thing I liked about cable, when it first came out, I was equal to NBC, CBS, and ABC. When you flipped through the cable box, I think in the Albany area it was in a pretty low number, I think it was number two, or one, so you couldn't miss it, you had to go through it; and some of the tapes I was showing were very subversive in a certain way, just sliding right in.

RRX: So, people were like what the heck is THIS?

George: What the heck is this, yeah! (laughs)

RRX: Catching a glimpse of that Ministry video, wow!

George: Yes, I loved it! On YouTube today, there's so much out there, it's on overload. But back then you were equal to these other channels. Not that the production quality was equal to it, but the possibility of someone running across it, having to consider it a moment was right in

your face.

RRX: So cable access was quite the creative outlet.

George: It took a lot of effort. I was interested in the production part of it, getting it on. My job was finding people to do the interviews.

RRX: Like Mike Eck! I saw him on one of the Youtube videos.

George: In the beginning, my brother Gene was great about doing interviews. We got to meet people like Martha from The Motels, George Thorogood, people we admired locally; Blotto, Fear of Strangers. There was a club in Rensselaer, Hulabaloo; We did a lot of things there, they seemed most inviting.

George Guarino's work can be

viewed at the following locations:
 Uncommon Grounds, 24 Clifton Country Rd.
 Clifton Park
 PH Gallery, 455 Broadway, Troy,
 through My 31st
 Uncommon Grounds, 1235 Western Ave., Albany, May 13/June 14
 Hudson Underground, 124 Warren St., Hudson
 Featuring the Hypnosis/Pictrance Process, June 15th

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A Quiet Mind - May is Mental Health Month

By Fred Aseel

Mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness. The U.S. Surgeon General has defined mental health as “a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity.” Yet, as a society we contribute to limiting activity and encourage non-verbal communication – have your groceries delivered to the curb, email your doctor your ailments and

even hold an appointment with your psychologist over the phone. Then we lay a stigma on mental illness that prevents many people from seeking help and appropriate care. The prejudice, labeling and discrimination of mental illness becomes as disabling as the illness itself.

“So now we’ve come upon the hardest things I’ve even done. It’s telling you that I’m a mess. What sort of mess I mean is self-destructive gasoline, the kind that strips you of your best.” [Chamelion Boy by Blue October].

I suffer from depression and anxiety and am borderline

bipolar with obsessive compulsive disorder. *“I bet you’re waiting for that long sob story of how I was mistreated again. No, I wasn’t built that way. I was strong but desperately brave*

“The one consistency in my journey to find a quiet mind is music”

and I didn’t mean to scare ya.” [Schizophrenia – Blue October].

Some days I can’t force myself out of bed; I lay there replaying conversations in my head from years past fretting over how those exchanges could have played out different or things I should have said. I avoid places I have never visited before solely because I have never been there before; Do you pay the waitress or do you pay at the register – I start to shake with fear that I would have to ask. I notice chipping paint on the kitchen wall, and now 48 hours later I am still awake, the kitchen is repainted, the contents of cabinets are alphabetized and new backsplash installed – after which, the paint cans and tools will remain a fixture in the kitchen for months. I leave myself notes on the bathroom mirror to remind myself that I’m having a good day because I took my medication so that I don’t confuse a good day with a sign that I no longer need the medication.

“I only want you to see my favorite part of me, and not my

ugly side.” [Ugly Side by Blue October]. The one consistency in my journey to find a quiet mind is music. My music of choice is Blue October – *“an automatic steeple for depressed and lonely people”* [The Answer by Blue October]. Their music comforts me, consoles me and forces me to feel an array of feelings that helps me recognize and address my reactions and behavior. It helps me believe I am, and will, be alright and to focus on the positive and prioritize that which is important. *“All my life, been running from a pain in me, a feeling I don’t understand, holding me down. Today, I don’t have to fall apart, I don’t have to be afraid... Get back up.”* [Fear by Blue October].

Psychologists believe that music has a positive impact on mental health by helping those inflicted resolve conflict and find long lost understanding which in turn enhances mental health. Music can help verbalization about topics that may be difficult to discuss and rhythmic and repetitive aspects engages the neocortex of our brains which calms us and reduces impulsivity.

*“If I could let go
Then I could change the world
But I can’t stop always tearing myself down. I can be good enough yeah, I will break ground”*

[Break Ground by Blue October]

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Pop Punk Heroes and Generation Z

Singer, Songwriter, Guitarist, Producer Nick Rossi shines in the new frontier of self-made musicians.

By Liam Sweeny

The Capital Region has a lush forest of musical talent, and like any forest, a tall oak has to spring from the ground before it can caress the sky. We have players who've entertained us, gave us thrills throughout the years. And we have musicians that are about to.

Nick Rossi is a one-man army. He wears as many hats as can fit him, and his sound will have you guessing which hat's got the most magic. His latest EP, *My Serenity* was released in February.

We sit down with Nick and discuss the Renaissance.

RRX: Anyone who listens to your work would have two hard times; one, believing that such a full sound is coming from a solo artist, and two, that the artist in question is nineteen years old. Were you surrounded by music as a kid, or did you just dig it one day and didn't stop digging?

NR: I was raised in the 80's rock genre of music. My dad was very fond of Van Halen, Iron Maiden, Led Zeppelin, and other bands of that 70's - 80's rock genre and he would play their music almost everyday in my car ride to and from day care as a very young child. I also got into video games at a very young age

as my dad was also a bit of a gamer himself. The one game that I will always cherish is guitar hero. Believe it or not if I hadn't started playing guitar hero on an everyday basis I would not be where I am today. It was something about playing all of my favorite songs that I grew up with on a plastic gaming guitar that made me say, I want to do this for real. Weeks later I got my first red squire guitar and I took off running.

RRX: With every artist or musician comes a supporting cast. Other musicians, even if their sessions artists, and people behind the scenes. How do you navigate advice and good intentions when you have a "vision" in your ear?

NR: When I have a vision in my head for a song, it's honestly very hard to veer off in a different direction than where I was initially going. I've gotten a lot of feedback from many different people while in the process of recording new songs and mixing them and I am always open for feedback to get an outsider's perspective of what I'm creating. I feel like it can be the best thing or the worst thing sometimes. There might be a part of the song that I love and some might agree, but some will think "ehh, maybe you can change this" and that's where I get into conflict with myself. At



Photo provided

Nick Rossi praises Guitar Hero in helping to develop young talent.

the end of the day I try to stick with my gut feeling, but I always take feedback into consideration and I definitely try to look at certain things in a whole new light, especially when I find myself stuck.

RRX: Jamming out on your latest EP now. There's such a big sound in the guitar, a really positive, energetic thrust to it. I don't really like to compare people's music to other bands, so I won't. But that doesn't mean you can't. What bands would've been high praise to you if I compared you to them?

NR: Green Day and Blink-182 are my absolute all-time biggest influences in terms of genre, sound and presence. Every time I show someone new my music, that's the first thing they say

to me is "wow this sounds like 90's rock, sort of like Blink-182 or Green Day". The big guitars, the fast-paced energy and attitude are all inspired by these two giants. I've been listening to these two bands since I discovered them when I was probably 6 or 7 years old. They got me into the pop-punk genre and till this day, it is my favorite genre. With that being said, I do have to give credit to other huge bands in the genre for influencing my sound such as New Found Glory, Yellowcard, etc. I could go on and on.

RRX: You just released an EP called *My Serenity*. I'm really digging this, and I'm wishing you my best with it. Can you tell us a little about it, maybe add a few

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neat facts about how it was put together?

NR: Glad you like it! I appreciate the kind words. When I was recording and putting together my first EP, *For Tomorrow*, I was still in the process of writing some of the songs on *My Serenity*. I wanted to take the production and songwriting to the next level for this EP and really showcase what I am all about and share music I feel so passionate about with the world. I rushed my first EP out as I didn't really have much time for crazy edits and such as I was starting my first

year at college and couldn't really do anything when I was away. I started all of the recording and production for *My Serenity* over this past summer, so I had every day to work on it which is what I did. I would get home from work every single day around 2:30pm and I would go right to my room and work on my songs. I think it took me around 7-8 months to put this EP together to the best of my ability as a producer, songwriter, and mixing and mastering engineer. I was actually learning how to master while I was mastering the songs on this EP. It took me a bit to really get down

the basics and to get the best out of each song as I could from mixing and mastering. My end goal was to make every song sound as big as possible and evoke as much emotion as I could manage to produce, and I think I did just that.

RRX: This is where you answer the question I didn't ask. Who is out there musically that you have your eye on? What do you have on your calendar for 2019? The floor is yours.

NR: For the past few years, I've closely been following State Champs. It amazes me how they originated out of the same area (Upstate New York) that we live in and they've made it big and they have a massive fan base now. They are also a huge

inspiration to me and their music inspires my sound as well and some of the lyrics I write. Seeing them grow and become big from a small town such as my own really gives me hope and constantly gives me something to look forward to each and every day. It reminds me that anything is possible, all you need is dedication and the drive to take it to the next level. I've been in the works with some new music already. I've also opened up for a local artist by the name of Katie Louise a few weeks ago and I intend to do more shows like that soon and maybe even get a band together at some point soon. I'm very excited to see where my music takes me this year and in the future!

■ Rossi counts Green Day and Blink 182 among his bigger influences

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Music, Family and the Best Medicine

Candy Ambulance found each other, and are on an epic quest to find your listening ears.

By Rob Smittix

Candy Ambulance is a three piece group hailing from the Saratoga Springs area or maybe it's Queensbury. I guess it doesn't really matter now because they are actually relocating to Troy. I do like the sound of that, Troy-based Candy Ambulance, yup it does have a ring to it. However, I was thrilled to have visited the band's house in the North-Country for this interview and a private performance previewing some new material. I

may just be a fan boy posing as a journalist.

Lifelong friends and bandmates Jesse Bolduc (Bass) and Jon Cantiello (Drums) joined their queen, Ms. Caitlin Barker (Guitar/Vocals) in a conversation with me on the floor of their rehearsal space. Barker so eloquently places F-bombs in so many of her sentences. For obvious reasons we had to omit these parts, but you are encouraged to imagine them in your own mind. Let's begin.

RRX: I really want to get to the core of what defines you, let's

dig deep. Who is Candy Ambulance? What is your message?

Caitlin: Boys?

Caitlin: We just want to rock and roll and do it with people.

Group: (Laughter)

Caitlin: So for me, I was kind of in that place in my life, like okay it's time to have babies; do that thing. When these two came along (referring to Jesse and Jon) I was in a relationship, I thought I was going to get married. I was settled on that, he was older and he had money, I was like alright this is cool, this will work. It took two weeks of jamming with these guys in my apartment bedroom and one open mic to move in together, we've been together ever since. It was just a snap decision

(snaps fingers) and I think in doing so I was able to be empowered to go through and really look at myself.

I feel this next record is very um... very personal and I think that my song writing style is kind of introspective rather than us necessarily having a message. But... I think it's a good time for my voice to be heard because it is about sexual abuse that I had suffered from childhood; I guess I wouldn't say suffered... but it led me into this whole spiral of not thinking. I don't know, I drink way too much. I have a lot of issues, fortunately functioning alcoholism is my only dangerous issue. I'm kind of lucky to have gone that route. That's

why it's called "Traumatic" (the forthcoming album). It's about the trauma that I dealt with and how that effected my personal relationships and the way that I viewed myself in the world after. From that point on I've been in a lot of bad relationships. I was with a guy for two years that was incredibly abusive, he ended up stalking me. It was awful, it was crazy, it's like mind control, it's like you're in a cult.

So then I get with these guys (the band) and I was like F-that. I cut off people I don't want in my life anymore, I started therapy, I am easily the happiest I've been in my life and it was from being in a band. So I guess the point of our band for me was that it saved me.

RRX: Well a band is family.

Caitlin: Yeah it did, it created a family and it's two people who love me, support me, and have taken care of me for 5 years, it's amazing to have a relationship between two people working for five years, to have it be between three people is really special.

RRX: Can you tell us more about the new album you are working on?

Jesse: We've started mixing. Very excited to have a hand in that.

Jon: The material we're about to put out is definitely the closest translation of who we are as a group, so far. I think up until now we've just been taking good stabs at what we might want to be, which was close to what we are. I

think this next one doesn't abandon the branding that we did to ourselves or our listeners branded us with. I think it's just way more truthful, way more grown up and closer to what we've been trying to do this entire time. I don't think you can call it punk or grunge.

Caitlin: And we did it with Tommy Stinson as our producer. He's the bassist for The Replacements. We went to Hudson and recorded with him, you know it was a huge deal. I've been a Replacements fan for a long time, I kind of lost my mind. He's crazy, he's so fun. It was exactly how you'd picture a rock star, he also played bass for Guns and Roses. He's a legitimate rock star.

By the third or fourth day we were on the floor, wasted at like 4:00 AM. When we did the vocals, I went down by myself. He wanted to know the content and what I was writing about because we did it live. He heard a little bit of the lyrics but didn't really know what I was going for. Over a bottle of whiskey we had this heart to heart about my past and he has had some similar hardships. We were emotional and just going for it and then we

recorded the takes; I don't really remember it. Then we woke up the next day. He was worried that maybe I died in the room at his house. He was concerned that maybe I choked on my vomit because I wasn't up very early. He said he was really wrestling with do I just go in there? Like I don't really know this girl, I don't want to just barge into the room. He was scared that I had died because that's how much we drank.

So I get up and I'm like 'oh God we're going to have to record all of it again, so hungover.' He's like 'Dude I know, this is going to suck.' So we went and got a drink and a coffee and we go there fully prepared to have to re-record everything. We snagged every single vocal take blackout drunk. I'm not slurring, they're great takes. You hear him screaming at me. He's like, "Pull it out! Get it!" There was one song where we did seventeen vocal takes, I can't even imagine what that scene must've looked like. The two of us just wasted but he pushed me so hard and the only one that was good was take seventeen. He said "it's not right" and he made me sing in a way I've never sung

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Now You See Me, Now You Hear Me



Photo provided

Singer Erin Hanna brings her powerful voice to the light as she makes her debut.

By Liam Sweeny

One of the best things about interviewing musicians for RadioradioX and Xperience is the chance I get to be completely surprised and blown away. Like seeing a young singer and hearing “she’s just starting out, she’s gonna be huge,” and listening to that first song and knowing that it is the God’s honest. That was my introduction to Capital Region native Erin Hanna.

With a voice that could move the breeze across the fields and

■ *Marionette*, Erin’s debut album, was released in July 2018.

set the tall grass to rustle, Erin is currently attending the School of Art Institute in Chicago, and has released *Marionette*, her debut CD on Spotify and Apple Music.

I sit down with Erin to talk about the particulars of astral projection insurance.

RRX: I don’t usually write basic questions, mainly because I’m not that smart, but I think in your case, I really should be asking: how did you start out, not only with music, but with your art as well? Did you just explode on the scene, or have you been playing for a large part of your life? In short; what’s your superhero origin story?

EH: I started playing piano when I was young. I moved on from that when I was about ten and then took up vocal lessons.

I was on my way to becoming an opera singer, then one day I decided I wanted to be a rock star. I started taking bass lessons and went to my first music camp with Don Warren called U-Rock Camp. At my first camp, Don brought me out of my small fourteen year-old comfort zone by having me play bass and sing on “Sex and Candy” by Marcy Playground.

Shortly after I started guitar and ukulele, and I wanted to write my own songs. The first song I ever wrote is not featured on *Marionette* because it’s too embarrassing. I didn’t have the courage to produce the album until I brought Don, who was also my guitar teacher, my title track *Marionette*. He loved it and gave me the confidence I needed.

As far as art goes, I’ve always been inclined to make it. From finger painting to oil portraits, I’ve covered quite a bit of ground. Now I study at School of the Art Institute of Chicago and I find I’m more fulfilled than I thought I could ever be.

RRX: Your voice, on *Marionette*, and that whole groove, it’s very long and deep and it has a gravity that, if someone just sees you, they’re not going to get. You have amazing depth both in voice and word, so in your opinion, do your lyrics demand a certain voice, so to speak, or does your voice demand a certain type of lyric?

EH: I think my voice demands a certain type of lyric. I think that because of its deep tone. I don’t think happy tunes have the same effect when sung by me, unless I am to change the style in which I’m singing, which I can do. My earlier songs focus on happier themes. My lyrics are deeply powerful to me, and I hope my voice transfers that power to its listeners.

RRX: You’re also an artist, and just like your singing, your art has an age defying gravity to it. I did notice that in the title of your Instagram page (@dizzybones,) you give a shout out to New York’s Capital Region. How important is the identity and pride, I guess, that comes with being from our area?

EH: I would say that growing up around Albany influenced my artwork not so much physically,

but emotionally. When you say age defying I tend to think of my Dad's body wash, but I try to put mature and childlike themes in my work, if they're not completely serious. I like to work with "kid's materials" like polymer clay, felt, etc.

There is also a component with adding your hometown in your Instagram bio which is that locals can source your work and become fans, or possibly even purchase it. As far as Albany goes, I hope my identity shows in my work because where I grew up is a large part of who I am.

RRX: I love interviewing multi-artistic people. There's something in creating that's universal, and I think humanity could spend an eternity exploring the creative process. Your music and your art are very complementary, in that as I listen and look, I feel like they sync. What 'themes,' we'll say, do you pick up on when you work?

EH: One of my favorite themes would be a sense of self-erasure. After going through being bullied in high school, I wouldn't want to show my face. In many of my pieces at school here so far, I've found that I don't include a face, or I'll leave out key features like eyes or mouths. Then, maybe the eyes and/or mouth will reappear in a different part of the piece. Some other themes I enjoy exploring are conquering personal fears, media

depiction of women and social expectations of women, loneliness, and self-reflection. A lot of my art is very personal and there is no central theme.

RRX: I was able to immerse myself in you in minutes; from getting 50 characters on your end, I could do that. A world which is, now, more yours than mine, is radically different than the one where I stood on the street corner selling drawings on scrap. What does art have to say in this "age of exposure," and how does art have to say it?

EH: If you are an artist in this day and age you must scream it from the rooftops. People are starting to care less and less about art it seems, and that is why we must keep it alive. Many contemporary artists are doing that through using new mediums, digital media, social media, and more. One thing that breaks my

heart is when I see a piece by an artist reposted and go uncredited. Somebody put their time and effort into that piece, and you have no right to share it without their knowing.

RRX: I really love *Marionette*, I do. Can you tell us loyal Capital Region supporters how it came to be? Was it a long journey or a fevered sprint? And were you active in physical art while you were in the recording process? If so, did the art and music go hand in hand in any way, or did scheduling demand compromises?

EH: "Marionette" was definitely a fevered sprint (the song, that is). I remember when I wrote it, I was full of anxiety so much so that I convinced myself the song wasn't about me. I told myself I wrote it about my friend who was involved in an abusive relationship. I was active in art while recording, for a large

part of it I was painting a mural for my high school's elementary school section. I was also applying to college and putting together my portfolio for that. Since I didn't have many social plans my senior year, scheduling wasn't usually an issue, but the two things combined did make me quite busy.

RRX: This is where you get to get to answer any question we didn't ask but should have. Who do you love out there? What's on your plate this year? What's your best Cthulhu recipe? The floor is yours.

EH: I guess one thing I want the world to know (or the Capital Region, at least) is to never stop working on your craft. It takes years, decades even to master something. This is why you must keep going. That doesn't mean it's wrong to fall off the wagon now and again, but when you do, it is

most important to pick yourself back up.

Who do I love? That's easy. I love my dad, my mom, my boyfriend Nate, my sister Abby, my dog, Don, Linda, and many others who helped contribute to this album. Hold people close, because you never know when they're going to let go.

Erin will be appearing on the RadiatioX stage at the Riverfront Arts Festival in June.

Instagram:
@erinhanna



Photo provided

■ Erin is currently attending the School of Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC)



Photo provided

Sharing Something Beautiful

From Fat 'n' Bad in the Capital Region to singing for Santana, Kingston native Tony Lindsay begins a bright new solo project,

By Liam Sweeny

The Capital Region has deep roots, and some names pop up, some are buried deeper. In the late 70s, there was a scene and a player that would go from the snow and the cold to the palm trees and sunshine of California, only to make his mark.

Few people around here know that the long-standing singer for Santana, Tony Lindsay, was, and is, one of us. Forever proud to call himself a native, he was more than gracious enough to chat with us.

RRX: I played (Santana's) *Supernatural* out; had to go buy a new one. You sang vocals

on that album, and so many more. It just had so much heart, and really a mystic feel to it. Where exactly does that vibe come from? Can you give us a window on that creative process?

TL: The vibe from the creation of Santana's album *Supernatural* comes from many sources. It was the combination of already famous artists, new upcoming artists, and a few different producers, put together by Clive Davis to perform with The Santana Band. Something like that had never been done before and made it such a huge hit because the vibe and the songs were set up so that people of all ages could sit and enjoy it together.

RRX: When you were living in Kingston,

playing around here, you were in the band Fat and Bad. You are the first former member of Fat and Bad that I've had the chance to interview. Can you let our local music fans know what Fat and Bad was all about, throughout its storied life?

TL: I'm from Kingston, NY but I went to college at SUNY Albany. Moved off campus, lived downtown and also worked at a famous clothing store called Snappy Men's Shop. A head shop business owner by the name of David Ward was the leader of the band Fat and Bad. We were probably the hottest R&B band in the Albany area. I used to play congas and sing, sat in with the band a few times and then was invited by David to become a member. It was only a short time after that when that particular band split up and I can't remember the reason why, but we reformed without David Ward and called the band Fat.

RRX: I'm jamming out to something beautiful right now; literally, *Something Beautiful*, your latest solo R&B album. It's very upbeat, very "sunny," if that's a good description. What's different for you doing a project like this versus working on something that isn't a solo?

TL: When you create a solo project, all of the decision making, the songs, the package, the people you involve, everything, including the financial responsibility, in my case, was purposely on me. This way I maintain control of who I want to be involved. When it's a band project, everyone in the band holds the responsibility.

RRX: You've done the Star-Spangled Banner at NBA, NFL, and MLB games out on the west coast, including the Golden State Warriors, the Forty-Niners, the SF Giants and others – I have heard how difficult the Star-Spangled Banner is to sing. Can you comment on what goes into that?

TL: Don't try to get too fancy, sing the melody, add your inflections and personality, and don't start the song too high because "The rockets red glare the bombs bursting in air" and "The land of the free and The home of the brave" are gonna be high notes to reach. Always leave a window to get out.

RRX: We have interviewed a few musicians who've come from the Hudson Valley and went off to find success out west. What is it about the west coast that makes it

the destination-to-be for players around here? What do you think the Capital Region do to hold onto the talent better?

TL: For me, it's the weather. Too damn cold on the East coast. I will always love New York, it will always be in my heart, and whenever folks ask me where I'm from I always say, "Kingston, New York," but I can't function in that cold, man.

RRX: Another Santana question. Carlos Santana cuts such an imposing figure in the music scene. And you sang for him, which is a unique bond in a band. Were there ever any "moments of wisdom" between you and him that that you feel comfortable sharing?

TL: Working with legends like Carlos Santana there are moments of wisdom every day around him, if you're paying attention enough to learn from them. Music wise, he opens up your mind to music from other parts of the world because that's what he listens to. Being on time, making sure the band is tight, taking personal care on the road, all of that kind of stuff is part of the success.

RRX: So you've got the new solo album that's out. Is there a tour for that right now? Any other projects happening? And can we tug on your nostalgic heartstrings and get you to come by the 518 and show the Capital Region some love?

TL: *Something Beautiful* is being well received on The Independent soul and smooth jazz levels here in the U.S and parts of Europe. In fact "Sweet Love," which is the first single, has been number 1 for the past 2 weeks and has been sitting in the top 10 and within the top five for quite a few weeks. I just shot a video for the second single which will be "Something Beautiful". I'm in the process of putting a show and a band together to perform my original material. *Different Moods, The Message is Love, Memoirs, Tony Lindsay* are previous cd's that I've released. *Something Beautiful* is my 5th

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Tony would love to bring *Something Beautiful* to the 518.



Local Legend

Greg Flaymes
"SARGE"

Rest In Peace

Based on photography by Rudy Lu, Ron Schubin and Martin Benjamin

Tales from the Door

By George Glass

Hello my fellow associates and patrons, today's sermon is about when it's time to go. First thing you need to understand; we want you to have a good time, but not at the expense of everyone else. Obviously, we are there to protect the owners and their establishments. But, we are also present to look out for you. When folks are sauced up, inhibitions are non-existent and the part of themselves that needs to stay under wraps for society's sake is unleashed. When you're in that state of mind, reason and civility are tough concepts to grasp. And onto this, the Bouncer, a voice of rationality and logic.

In the old days, the coolers and cowboys had only one purpose; if you acted up, we'd throw your ass to the curb. Figuratively or physically, it was up to you. Now, with the advent of frivolous lawsuits and the requirement of licenses, our roles have changed a bit. Currently, it behooves us

to talk you off the ledge and get you in a cab without a scratch. When this occurs without chaos, it works out for everybody. Most employers frown upon their staff being arrested for disorderly conduct or assault. I can't imagine waking up in a cage and realizing your job is in jeopardy on Monday morning!

The mark of a responsible establishment and staff is making sure that doesn't happen to you. So, if a burly fellow pulls you aside and asks if you're ok or tells you it's time to go; don't argue, complain, or threaten us with calling the family lawyer/politician. Just acknowledge our words and let us help you. I hope folks will take this bit of advice and keep it in mind, the next time they venture out. Until next time, please act responsibly and drink within your limits!







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Thumbs Up and Open Road Music

Chasing the next great experience has given artist Deb Cavanaugh a window on the world she can roll down.

By Liam Sweeny

Multi-instrumental. Multi-talented. Many styles of music. I love these phrases, and I wish that they were a stock-standard definition, like a title you get just for playing your first show. But only a few people can truly pin these to their lapels. Deb Cavanaugh, of course, is one of them.

With a resume that stretches back to the early eighties Albany scene and the psychedelic band General Eclectic to a folk sound that is at once haunting and homey, Deb Cavanaugh has exemplified the talent profile of the Capital Region.

I sit down with Deb to talk of the best of times.

RRX: You spent a lot of the time hitchhiking across country in the past, stopping to play wherever you could. My father was a similar traveler, and he looks back fondly. In your experience, could a young singer in their twenties get anywhere near that kind of experience under their belt today? And how would it have to be different?

DC: I do think it's more



Deb Cavanaugh performs with a wide array of instruments, including a banjo, mandolin and mountain dulcimer.

Photos provided

difficult today because times really have changed. I did most of that traveling in 1974 and '75 when it was easier to get rides and was also more acceptable, although I still pick people up when I see them. I think it's possible to have similar experiences if you're willing to take chances with no expectations. The beauty of hitchhiking is that there's such a random assortment of people who pick you up. However, I think it's important to enter into it with the acceptance that you're going to listen to the stories of

the people who give you the rides. That's where the experiences are. My former husband referred to himself as a "road scholar," and that is so true. You learn from the people you meet.

RRX: What I really like about your music, as I'm listening now, is how tightly the instrumentation, namely guitar, and your vocals are mutually reinforcing. I'm having a real hard time figuring out if you wrote words for the music or music for the words. Do you have a particular flow in your songwriting, like one you usually

start out with?

DC: Every song is different. Sometimes I'm inspired by a phrase, and sometimes the music comes first. It also depends on what instrument I'm playing. After taking a series of songwriting workshops, first with Janis Ian then with Bob Franke, I started giving myself assignments to challenge myself and stay out of a specific mold. Then I also have instrumental pieces that some people want me to write words

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for, but they feel complete to me as they are.

RRX: There's a lot of "story" to your music. I get the sense that there's something in it that's greater than the sum of parts. I know that's really an element of your life, which can't truly be

broken down, but if you had to think about it, are there themes that you like to play off, or that maybe you need to?

DC: That's an interesting question. If you had asked me a year ago, I would have said that there was no real theme. However, I recently was in a songwriting

group, and they commented that I often have elements of nature in my songs including a lot of night sky images. I know that I write a lot from my life experiences, too. It's how I've gotten through a lot of traumatic events over the years. I also seem to write a lot of songs in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. I guess I'm fond of that swaying feeling you get with waltzes.

RRX: You are a multi-instrumentalist. You play guitar, mandolin, mountain dulcimer and banjo. I know from being a guitar player once that even something like an effect can give you a whole new voice. So, with these four different string instruments, how does "voice" come into play when you write songs with, or for them?

DC: Each instrument definitely demands their own songs. The dulcimer and mandolin have their own unique sound and often sing unique types of songs. I've also been enjoying doing rock and roll covers on the mountain dulcimer with a wide range of effects. Those effects are changing the way I think about the dulcimer in general and changing the types of songs written on that instrument. I was classically

trained on piano and occasionally write songs for that instrument as well. I haven't yet written for the banjo, but I'm sure the same thing will happen. I also like to play in alternate tunings on the guitar. As soon as I start playing in one of those tunings, the songs start writing themselves, and they are very different from the other guitar songs. I've been writing songs since I was a teen but didn't start playing strings until I was 40. It really changed everything.

RRX: A question about Heldeberg Music Together®, which fascinates me. This is something that you own and run, and it teaches music, in one way or another, from birth through four years old, from five to seven, and help for adults. So, since this is actually the coolest thing in the world, can you just tell us all about it?

DC: I love teaching Music Together®. It's an internationally recognized research-based early childhood music education program that's been running since 1987. I own a franchise in Delmar and Troy. There are 3000 centers in over 40 countries. The

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thing I love the best about it is I get to help create musical families. The grownups, who come with their children, are the ones who are required to participate. We give the kids an organic learning experience in which they can just observe, if that's what works for them. The adults are modeling the activities but also their love for music and willingness to jump right in and make mistakes because it's so much fun. The music we're learning is both simple and complex and is really interesting to listen to. I often have professional musicians bringing their kids to these classes because they see the value in it.

RRX: You've had a lot of

unique experiences, so many of them we haven't mentioned (like you being involved in a choir with Duke Ellington.) So, when someone starts out today, and their heart is gold, they feel the music, but they know there's something out there they need to experience, how do they find it? Or maybe, how do they look?

DC: I think the main thing is to be open to a wide variety of musical styles and varied experiences. My boyfriend often laughs about how spontaneous I am. I think it's that spontaneity that's brought me all the really cool experiences I've had. I'm also a big believer in positivity and creative visualization. I try to stay open to all possibilities and visualize what I need in my life. It's funny;

recently people have been referring to me as brave, which is not something I had really thought about before. It seemed to me that I foolishly jumped into situations without any forethought. It's that spontaneity again. It may not work for everyone, but so far, it's worked well for me. The other important component is making the music your own. I rarely play a cover exactly the way it was written and don't sing a song the same way twice. I have to feel them in the moment. That's where the magic comes into play.

RRX: Here is where you can answer the question we didn't ask. Who do you love out there? What do you have on your calendar for 2019? Which of your instruments is the favorite you're not supposed to have? Anything; the floor is yours.

DC: I have so many exciting things coming up this year. First off, I am going to Beijing, China for two weeks in mid-May to teach music in two bilingual pre-schools. I'll be teaching songs in English and bringing along traditional American instruments, mountain dulcimer and limberjack, and a crankie which

is a traditional American folk art that illustrates the songs. I get to teach the teachers as well and do a program for the parents. And ... they would like me to go back once a year.

Another fun project is my two weekly blogs. One is a family blog and the other is for my memoirs and opinion pieces. The memoir pieces about my younger days as a hippie vagabond parent are being turned into a book, *Recollections of a Hippie Mama*. The blog posts kind of serve as trailers for the finished product. I'm planning to put those on hold while in China and do a travelogue series of blog posts while I'm away.

Lastly, I've finally gotten a band together with Bob Donald on back-up vocals, guitar and keyboard, NikiChaos on back-up vocals and drums, and Shows Leary on bass. You can look for "Deb Cavanaugh and Dandelion Wine" doing quirky, fun-loving roots music in the near future. Our first show as a whole band will be at The Beer Diviner in Petersburg, NY on June 1st. This seems to be the year that a lot of things I've worked towards are coming together.



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Lucas Garrett: The Truth Is in the Music

With the upcoming release of his LP "Love is Better," Lucas Garrett gives his music a voice and lets it speak.

By Ralph Renna

I remember when I was a kid. My uncle gave me my first guitar and I wanted to be able to play it, right away, but couldn't. So I started taking guitar lessons, which never worked out! I still tried, pick it up quick, put it down quicker, and I just gave up. Many years later I played a little longer each time I picked it up. Jammed with friends, but I guess I gave up again or accepted the little ability I had to play. Although I was able to write music, play live and record, to this day I still have limited myself with learning how to play the guitar.

A couple years ago we played a benefit for the Strand Theater in Hudson Falls. This dude in a wheel chair rolled past me and said "Move it on over... Renna", and just kept going. But I knew who it was. Although we never met face to face, we had communicated prior to this day and now I have officially met Lucas Garrett. A fun loving, ball busting, string twanging, heart crooning, struggling local musician

just like the rest of us. As we talked, I looked at him and thought, "This guy is really doing it and no matter what life dealt him, failure is not an option.

He is writing great music and living his dream". I have since then taken some guitar lessons, still learning.

Lucas Garrett is truly an inspiration to me and many other local musicians and artists. The truth is, as Lucas states, "The condition is called Pompe disease. It's a muscular disorder where the muscles don't work as well as they should. This is due to a lack of an enzyme that breaks down glycogen". We caught up with Lucas to tell all, from the beginning to the release of his sophomore recording *Love is Better*.

RRX: Tell us about your earliest memory or moment when you discovered music was something you wanted to explore?

LG: One of my earliest memories as a child was listening to



■ Garrett entered music at 11 years old playing the ukulele.

Photo provided.

the various records my dad would have playing in the house. At the time, I knew very little about music! But one record that particularly grabbed my ear at that age was The Beatles, *White Album*. "It's a fantastic record that's still one of my favorites to this day. It wasn't until my brother, Max, started learning guitar that I knew it'd be something I'd want to do as well. At the time I started I didn't really know what I wanted out of it.

RRX: From childhood to today give us a brief biography of your musical career?

LG: I didn't really start performing live until after high school. I think I was 19 or so. I know that my first appearance was at a bar called Gaffney's in Saratoga. In fact I wrote a song,

"16 Caroline", which is about that place and it appears on my first album, *Evening's Come, But It's Not Dark*. This was released in 2017. I've played all over the Capital Region of upstate New York for about seven years, building connections and meeting new people every year. On May 10th I'll be releasing my follow-up LP, *Love is Better*.

RRX: Influences? Locally or national artists?

LG: My favorite band of all time is The Beatles. Other major parts of my influences range quite a bit. There's a lot of great stuff in just about any decade. To name a few I'd say: Frank Sinatra, Peter Gabriel, Jethro Tull, Talking Heads, the Decemberists, Jack White, and so much more.

One of the things I love about

this area is all the great local music we have! When they were a band, I loved listening to Asa Morris and the Mess! Other favorites of mine are William Hale and Candy Ambulance, among others. There's so many damned killer players and songwriters in this area that I feel very fortunate to be a part of the area's scene. I think it's really great that so many of us know each other and work well with one another. It really is an awesome community of folks.

RRX: When did you actually start playing music, what were the first instruments you played?

LG: I first started playing music when I was 11. My first instrument was the ukulele, which transitioned into the guitar. In high school and for a little while in college, I played piano, but I haven't properly practiced that instrument in years. I've often been the bandleader of various projects and can write music for other instruments, such as the cello, and violin, I just don't know how to play them.

RRX: Was this your first recording leading up to your

new cd? Inspirations in writing music—discography?

LG: My first EP came out in 2017. It was a selection of five songs that were mainly acoustic. For the upcoming record, not only was the recording process more involved, but the overall production value is much better. There's tons of things going on in this album, from keyboards, to electric and acoustic guitars, drums, auxiliary percussion, a string quartet, so many damned things.

The name on the album might be Lucas Garrett but there's a lot of collective love and man hours that went into making this thing.

For this record, I called on John Anthime Miller to play all the string parts. Jon Cantello and Gina De Nardo played drums. Gina was in the band for a good stint, too, which was definitely fun, and helped write one of the songs, "Aphrodite," along with the band's bassist, Kevin Kosach. At the time we started making the album, I didn't have a bassist, so my brother helped out on about half the songs, with Kevin recording the other half.

Other collaborators on the record were Zack Weidner and Eric Braymer on guitars, Corry Love-day on keyboards. The album was engineered and mixed by Jesse Bolduc and mastered by Jason Brown of Starling Studios.

I really tried to make a record that sounds solely like me. I tuned out other music and just started writing. I think different people will hear different influences depending on who else they like to listen to. We're really happy with how the record came out.

RRX: You, like many other local musicians, contribute to the scene to help other musicians, i.e. your video interviews. How do you see the importance of supporting the scene?

LG: Thanks. There are some people in the scene that I definitely disagree with regarding their methods, but at the end of the day it really is all about finding a way to work with and around one another. Supporting each other, in my view, is the only way to have any sense of long-term viability.

I feel that as an original music act it can be tougher at times to get the music out there, but once

it's there at least in my experience, you're set.

RRX: You are truly an inspiration to other local musicians but do you have any advice for any of those who are hesitant about making music because of a disability or fear, etc?

LG: At the end of the day, everyone has a disability. I can't allow myself to use that as a crutch or selling point for our music. I let the music speak for itself, and I think it does a good job at doing that. My advice is to just create. Write that song, paint that picture, do whatever. Just create. If you have something to say, say it.

The follow-up, full length LP, *Love is Better*, will be released May 10th at Downtown Social in Glens Falls. the release party will go from 9pm-12am and will feature guests William Hale and more. More information www.lucasgarrettmusician.com



Observations and Ramblings from a Cranky Old Guy

By Jeff Spaulding

This may sound like a political piece but it really isn't. Well, for the purpose of this newspaper I am not a political person.

A quick set up so you understand, I have never been a registered Republican or Democrat.

I call myself a GDI.

The "I" stands for Independent.

Should be pretty easy to guess the "GD."

I always vote person over party.

So, politics aside, this deals with frustration of anyone living in New York.

And I'm not some fly by night late addition to the state either.

After my birth in Florida (when dinosaurs roamed the earth), my family moved to Albany, then Loudonville.

After high school, I lived in Ohio a number of years, returning for about a dozen years, residing in Watervliet, Chatham, back to Albany and eventually

Schenectady.

A few more years of work forced trips to Indiana, Vermont and Massachusetts before settling down for good in 2007.

I am PROUD to say I am from New York.

I truly LOVE to say I am from New York.

I want to (eventually) retire and DIE in New York.

But the BASTARDS that run this state force me daily to change my mind.

And for the record, I blame EVERYONE in charge, not just a controlling party.

Here's one little example.

When was the last time you REALLY looked at your license plates?

Go ahead, I'll wait.

(A slight interlude while observant readers actually check their licenses, smoke 'em if you got 'em, wouldn't hurt for a pee break either.)

Everyone ready?

Did you wash your hands afterward?

Okay, for those looking at

license plates, you'll notice they are MUCH flimsier today than in the past.

They are also more bendable, and more prone to damage.

They also don't hold paint very well either.

And THAT, dear reader, is the bone of contention.

By the way, if YOUR license plate is beat up and worn consider this a warning, you'll thank me later.

Some time back, my wife was pulled over as she was on the Thruway close to Amsterdam.

The trooper told her that she (the trooper) could not read my wife's rear license plate.

She then gave my wife a ticket.

In truth, the license plate paint applied by prisoners, didn't take.

We're guessing it's a cheaper paint, a cheaper plate, a cheaper type of equipment to make the plate or a combination of the three.

More than likely it's another way the state of New York tries to save money, which unfortunately for us goes back to them in spades, thanks in part to the taxed and fined residents of the state of New York.

So as the trooper gave my wife the ticket, she said she had a certain amount of time to replace the plates or go to court (fine, court costs, wasted time, interacting with people).

We made it a priority.

Fortunately, according to New York, if the plates are THAT badly worn, they can be replaced for

free.

I was tempted to whack them a few times with a sledgehammer to make sure (Andy gets enough of my money, thank you.)

So, one afternoon after work I hit the DMV with the plates, registration, insurance certification and twenty-seven 8 X 10 colored glossy pictures with circles and arrows and a paragraph on the back of each one to explain what each one meant (forget that last one, just seeing if you were still paying attention...thanks Arlo.)

The DMV was mobbed, imagine the Old Country Buffett the day the welfare checks come out.

I was there for well over an hour, getting the hairy eye ball from everyone staring at "those numbers," hoping to see if they were next so they could leave the gates of Hell.

I swear I saw a couple of gambling addicts laying odds down.

Once I saw the clerk, in truth, she was very helpful.

While she couldn't "officially" confirm my theory on why the quality was down, that wink to her eye just said to me:

"Yes, we're all getting hosed baby"

And now we wait to hear from the court.

In closure, next time you're on the road, look at the vehicles all around you...how many of your fellow motorists do you see (paraphrasing the song) "BREAKIN THE LAW! BREAKIN THE LAW!"

Maybe it's time to Uber.



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“Gotta Know the Songs” - Xperience Fiction

By Liam Sweeny

The Leslie speaker surged and recessed, pushing out the sounds of the Hammond B3 like a rip current in a hurricane. Swan walked a funkline with his left hand and peppered Jackson's guitar riffs with the acrobatics of his right. He was surprised to hear DeeDee's brushes on the drums, what with the firepower coming out of the rest of the gear. They fought about her bringing a mic, but only because he didn't want to sing over her drums in the only PA at the gig. The crowd was telling him he didn't have to worry. A glance at DeeDee was telling him she couldn't hear herself and was playing by wire. She'd have to get a bigger slice of the night's tips if he wanted to keep her next week.

The Becker Café was a business hangout in Albany. It was a quiet spot, where the music was no more than live background to deals struck in the shadows of the Capital building. Swan sometimes wondered, on a big tip night, what he was being paid to forget he'd heard.

He turned over and aimed his voice low, “C sharp.” MacAvoy was a new pick up. He came in to a biker bar down by the river during one of the open mics Swan subbed for. He liked the cat's blues lead, but maybe more the fact that, at the open mic, they seemed to be the only two musicians that gave a fuck. Going by MacAvoy's inability to follow a



chord progression or key change, he had quite a few fucks left to give. But at least he turned down when he was off in the weeds. Jackson had a spoon on his strings, improvising a slide. The crowd dug it, marveling at the ingenuity. They didn't know Jackson couldn't keep his hands on a real slide to save his life.

They played out the set and took a break around eight. Swan knew the waves of the gig, no matter what was happening down the road. The nine-to-twelve crowd was going to be crazier, but their requests were going to be closer to the songs a player has to put in their starter kit. Early crowds around there had a “let's stump the band” feel. Swan wouldn't have had it any other way.

Swan, MacAvoy, and DeeDee were outside on the open patio. A penetrating rain was infusing the night air with the smell of ozone and the rejuvenation of an arriving cold-front. Swan even wondered if he had a sweater in the van.

“I'm trying to catch you, Swan, I really am,” MacAvoy said. “Can you play a few more blues tunes? Give me something I can go off on?”

“I could, but you can't just go around being Stevie Ray Vaughan

all day. You need to know the changes.”

“I know. I just don't want to let anyone down.”

“Don't worry. No one's listening to you.”

“Oh, Swan, that's rough,” DeeDee turned to MacAvoy.

“Don't listen to him. You're doing good.”

Swan took out a cherry cigar. “When you get good, when you know the progressions and you know those songs, those deep cuts, you'll play louder, and people will hear you. I'm not trashing you, it's good that you play low. You don't know a song and you step back. That's what you're supposed to do. But learn the songs.”

MacAvoy pulled the cellophane off a fresh pack of cigarettes. “I'm not used to these crazy chord-change songs,” he said. “Everyone I know rocks the one-four-five.”

“And that's good when your set list is five songs long, like those shows you guys set up. But doing a set like tonight, we're going to go through sixty-, seventy songs. You can't just sit there and jive out a one-four-five sixty-times,

you know?”

Swan reached in his pocket for his black, plastic film canister and flipped aside the lid with his thumb. He pulled out a bowl made from threaded pipe, washers and the only piece he had to buy, the piece that right then was packed with sticky skunk bud. Even the screen came from the bathroom faucet of his boarding house.

“Mac', go get Jackson. He'll be a baby if he don't get any of this.” MacAvoy flicked his embers to the road and tucked the butt into his pocket before he dipped back in to pull Jackson off the two-for-ones.

“I'm gonna make him eat those cigarette butts.”

“Why does he do it?” Dee Dee held her own smoke up to the glow from the streetlamp. “Put 'em in his pocket?”

“He said he's trying not to litter.” Swan leaned in and nudged DeeDee with his shoulder. “After the next set we'll take him to the landfill and leave him there.”

They laughed. “You're terrible,” DeeDee said.

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“He’s a good cat,” Swan said. “He’s young. When I was his age, I was in L.A., playing at a club that Pablo Escobar owned. I ever tell you that one?”

“I’ve heard it,” she said. “Not from you, though.”

“Oh yeah, Jackson showed up back—” Swan turned as the door opened and Jackson came out, trailed by MacAvoy. “Jackson, when did you show up in Escobar’s place?”

“I think it was around what, ‘90? ‘91? I just got divorced from Sandy, so, about then.”

“The place had iron bars on every window and cameras everywhere,” Swan said. “And you couldn’t take pictures.” He took a hit and paused his remembrance. “They paid us to play Colombian

music. I remember I had to go out and learn it. The owner gave me five hundred bucks when I showed up and told me to give it to a guy down the street. I spent a couple days with that cat learning folk rhythms. There were a thousand and twenty-four, and they wanted them all. But then they paid me good, man, real good. They were getting me whatever I wanted—drinks, drugs, girls—I just asked. And you showed up.”

“That owner was going to shoot me, I thought,” Jackson said.

“He told me he was going to shoot us both,” Swan said. “Me for bringing you. Damned Pablo Escobar’s joint.”

They stood out and watched the rain, and the voices that

assumed themselves to be whisperers were revealing themselves to be voices and gregarious shouts inside. The cabs were stopping more frequently, letting out new patrons in pairs. The nine o’clock crowd shook the rain off their umbrellas as Swan and the crew passed the plumber’s

pipe, blowing the smoke toward the outside kitchen vent to let it mix with the smell of fried onion rings and chicken tenders.

Swan glanced down the street, exhaled, and passed the pipe to MacAvoy.

“That’s why ya gotta know the songs.”



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The OMG! Band

By Mike Shudt

If you've spent any time at all following the local music scene in recent years, you've undoubtedly heard of The Funk Evolution Entertainment Group. Owned and operated by Stephen "Rocco" Christman, this musical conglomerate offers everything from its flagship eight-piece horn band Funk Evolution to a full on DJ service, an acoustic duo or trio, sound and lighting, and – new for this year – a five-piece party band known as, "The OMG! Band."

The OMG! Band was founded by Rocco in 2017 and initially performed under the name "EVO 2." Rocco formed the band around lead vocalist and Berklee alumni Gianna Robustiano, whom he had seen performing on social media. Rocco surrounded Gianna with a group of rock solid local musicians – Dave Teta on drums, Mike Lemme on guitar, Tim Fiato on keys and Joe

Benevento on bass. The band performed extensively at local clubs and private events throughout 2017 and 2018 before deciding to re-brand itself under the current name.

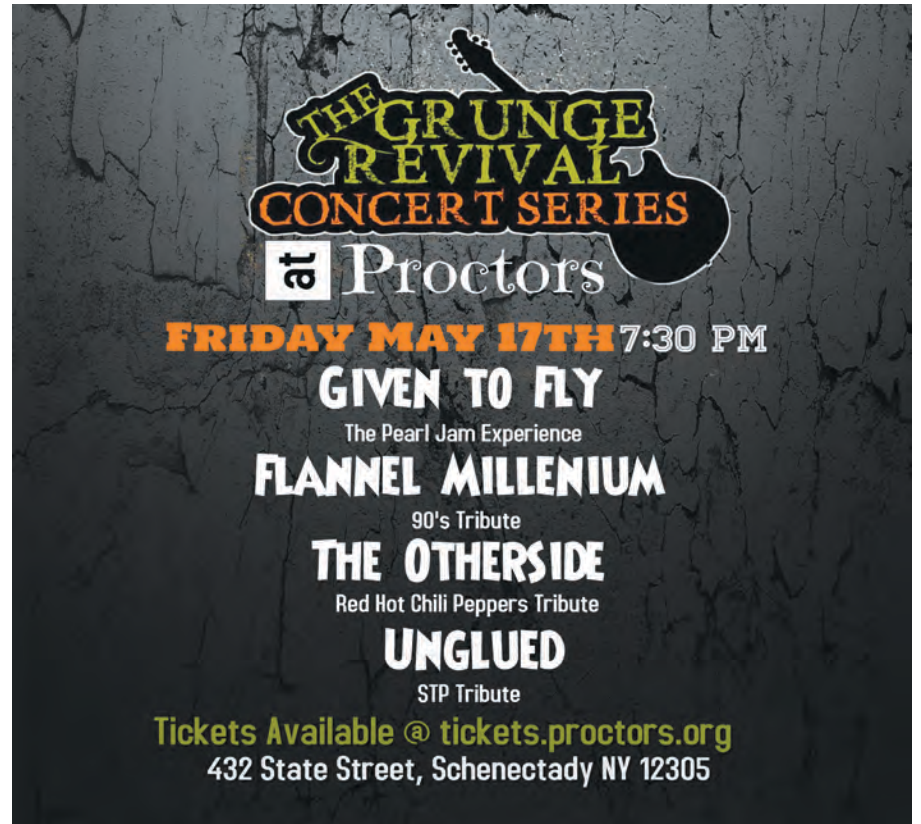
The OMG! Band aims to present an image and perform material that will appeal to the 21-30 demographic, something that Rocco felt was missing from the local scene. The OMG! Band will be performing a packed schedule for 2019 bringing its' catalog of hits from the past 3 decades mixed with current pop, rock, and country tunes to local venues such as Spare Time in Clifton Park, Firestone 151 in Schenectady, and Gaffney's in Saratoga.

Keep up with The OMG! Band on Facebook or their website at www.theomgband.com.

Mike Shudt is a veteran of the local music scene and can currently be seen performing across the Capital Region as the bass player in The Refrigerators.

■ Gianna Robustiano and The OMG! Band

Photo provided

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Photo provided

Caitlin Barker doing what she does best

Continued from Page 13...

before. He said “you don’t know your potential, get it out!”

RRX: Tommy Stinson was right to point out your potential, when I first heard Candy Ambulance, I thought this is a punk band but I can hear soul in your voice.

Caitlin: Yeah that was Tommy’s point, he was like ‘you don’t understand you’re a soul singer.’ He said ‘quit the timid girl stuff you don’t need to be that person.’ He was really cool and very inspiring. I think I probably

considered my vocals the least strong part of the band but now I’m like alright Tommy Stinson thinks I’m cool, I can do this.

RRX: So any idea when we can expect the new album?

Jesse: We’re thinking early summer.

For more on Candy Ambulance check out their website at www.candyambulance.com and if you wish to see them live, which is highly recommended, the trio will be at Desperate Annie’s in Saratoga Springs for Super Dark Monday, May 13th at 9:00 PM with *Eternal Crimes* and *Cindy Cane*.



Tony Lindsay (Cntd.)

Continued from Page 21...

solo CD and the time is perfect for me to start performing my songs. I would love to perform in the 518, Capital Region, show me some love, blast Tony Lindsay

over the airwaves.

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