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August 2019

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The Nice People on the Planet



■ (l - r) Pete Donnelly, Pete Hayes, Mike Gent

Photo provided.

With a raw determination to gather no moss, The Figgs forge ahead on a massic project, one of evolution and revolution.

By Liam Sweeny

Music's a hard road. The rock and roll dream is something you can do with a guitar, a garage and a fully-stocked bar. No, I'm talking about music. Because if you're serious about it, if your souls have tasted the sonic superhighway and you take your place trudging along the shoulder, it promises to be an elusive lover, a passion that you can just touch every once and again. The rest is blood, sweat and tears (and a few fully-stocked bars.)

The Figgs are a band that have carved out their own lemonade stand on the edge of that superhighway. Thirty years out, close to as many albums released, The Figgs (Mike Gent, Pete Donnelly, and Pete Hayes) deliver a very textured and energetic sound that can quickly get stuck in your head.

I sit down with Mike Gent to talk about the hot dog vendors at the American Revolution.

RRX: The Figgs has been in wattage for over thirty years now, and you've all seen the music world go through transformations. But music itself is

transformative too. When you go back from your earlier work to now, how would you say its evolved with the time, either as the pure music itself, or in the way you put it together?

Mike: We started in August of 1987 so I guess we've now been at it for 32 years? Yeah, I don't often listen to our earlier work much because since the band started, I was really the one that was ready to move on to the next thing before we had the previous work finished. So if we are working on a record, I am already thinking about the next one after that. Our music has obviously changed and

GRAHAM TICHY

A new generation of players are learning to take over the Capital Region, and Graham Tichy's at the blackboard.

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BUCK DHARMA

Neither Blue Oyster Cult nor guitarist Buck Dharma are fearing the reaper as they continue to tour.

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evolved in many ways over the course of three decades. I think for the better. Maybe some of our fans from the 90's wish that we still made records like that, but I think our records from the 2000's and 2010's are way better. Better songs, better playing, singing, better production, better artwork.

RRX: In 2012, you celebrated your thirtieth anniversary as a band, releasing a Figgs anthology called "1000 People Grinning." I know that when you're putting an anthology together, you have to cleverly mix your own unsung favorites in with the crowd favorites. Can you tell us a personal favorite you threw in, and why?

Mike: Yes, when we compiled that, we looked at what songs people reacted strongly to over

the years live, which songs were requested at shows the most, singles, and also some of our own favorites. For the most part though, we tried to stick to fan favorites.

RRX: You guys spent some time working with singer/songwriter Graham Parker, who, by the time you guys were playing with him, was a regular fixture on the charts in both the UK and the US. I've worked with UK writers, and I know there's an excitement and a slight culture change. Is it that way with music?

Mike: No, not really. We both enjoy listening to and performing good music. Ha! I guess the only difference is that we have a fondness for hard rock and that's not Graham's bag. I quickly realized that he wasn't really into 70's hard rock, especially from the

States. His influences were 60's soul and early ska. There have always been differences between US and UK music fans and I love reading about what was big over there, did nothing here and vice versa. The UK kind of gave up on Graham once the Rumour broke up, he moved here and started making records with American musicians. So the UK kind of missed out on this huge, fantastic chunk of his career, with almost 20 years of us being involved and they only in the last 10 years woke up and started listening again when the Rumour reunion happened and he started playing over there again. We've only toured Europe once without Graham, so very little of his fanbase over there even know that we exist.

Graham did show us how to slow down and groove more than we did at that time in '96, and at the same time, we lit a bit of a fire under his ass circa '96.

RRX: I'm jamming on a live set right now. The Figgs sound is pretty diverse, got to admit. It's a tough balance for any band to lay down a sound that's "signature" without every song sounding like the same riff in a different key. If you had to describe what you feel is your signature sound, what would you say?

Mike: That's a good and tough question. When people ask what kind of music we play, I usually answer "rock and roll music"... which confuses people because they are probably expecting a made up sub category and like you mention, we can be diverse



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especially with our live act and that can confuse the average music listener at times also. I never really thought about what our signature sound is. I think we try to write catchy songs that people will hopefully remember.

RRX: Most of you grew up in Saratoga Springs. And as you know, we Capital Region folk are a plucky bunch. Now you guys tour everywhere, and maybe the stage is the stage, but you have to hit the general stores and 3 AM diners too. What are 518 habits that you didn't think were 518 habits until you spent thirty years away?

Mike: When we first started touring down south, we of course discovered Waffle House, which is something the 518 is missing, a 24/7 breakfast chain. Here's a bad 518 habit...having state troopers between every exit on the Northway and Thruway

giving out speeding tickets.

RRX: And not to rest on your laurels at all, you've got a triple-LP coming out, *Shady Grove*. And you're re-releasing your first album, *Ginger*. How much of a difference is it putting out a new LP and re-releasing an original one that's three decades old? Are they night-and-day processes, or have they looped around to being almost similar?

Mike: Both projects have taken a lot longer than most of our other recent studio albums and reissues. *Ginger* took many years to finish because we had to get the masters back which involved negotiations and deals. We then had to bake and transfer the tapes, then from there we had to work around Pete's always busy schedule because he was in charge of that reissue. This was all happening while we were recording the new album

Shady Grove and he was also at the same time recording a double solo album.

Shady Grove has been a very difficult record to make for many reasons. One of them being that it's a triple record with 24-25 songs!

RRX: Here's where you get to answer the question I didn't ask. Shout outs welcome. Further the knowledge that Saratoga is the home of the potato chip? Educate, enlighten, emote – the floor is yours.

Mike: Check out thefiggs.com, and you can find us on all of the social media junk food that's out there. Lots of records to check out at our store, if you are new to the band, dig in!

One more thing....I saw a t shirt recently that stuck in my head "There are tons of nice people on this planet. If you can't find one, BE ONE.



Photo provided.

The Figgs performing live at Cozy Cabin Concerts



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The Long Journey to the Front Desk



■ (l to r) Nick Bisanz and Pat Irish

Photo provided

By Liam Sweeney

Music has an effect on us that we don't always realize, a way of pinning itself to memories no matter how deeply they bury themselves. Big labels plaster the airwaves with lousy tunes knowing that they'll grow on you as they play through enough of your better days. So imagine a great story, each part told with its own musical signature. That's an opera. Run it through a trusty amp and a warhorse PA, and it's a rock opera.

On August 3rd, we will see *The Front Desk*, the 518's very own rock opera, with a cast of characters bridging the divide between free verses and rehearsal space, spoken words and sung lyrics and

two crowds both capable of eager appreciation.

I sit down with Nick Bisanz and we discuss how to play the oxford comma on the drums.

RRX: *The Front Desk* was written by Pat Irish in 2011, correct? Can you tell us a little bit about it (without any spoilers, of course,) and the course it's taken to being produced? Did the production take eight years, or did life eat up a lot of that time?

NB: Correct. As well as being a bassist, songwriter, and poet, Pat has a career in the hotel industry. *The Front Desk* is a mostly first-person musical narrative of the various people and systems in a hotel within a 24 hour period. Pat composed *The Front Desk* and had it in complete form before I ever heard it in 2011. Life

has definitely intervened with getting the production to this electric trio point. I was busy doing a stint with now defunct 518 veterans, *The Last Conspirators*, and after that a short-lived project with Blotto drummer Paul Rapp. As well as playing covers for dollars. Pat's career and subsequent marriage necessitated a move from Albany to the Manhattan area.

RRX: So let's introduce the characters. There's you, Pat Irish, Michael Worsa making up team protagonist. Then we have John Glenn from Stellar Young and John Devries from Agitpop/Cellophane, both popping in the 518 to open up. So, who's doing what to make all of this happen?

NB: Thankfully, Howard Glassman at *The Low Beat* is a

long-time friend and supporter. John Glenn from Stellar Young is another good friend and super talented guy, so he will be doing a very rare solo set, and John deVries from Poughkeepsie NY, of Agitpop and Cellophane renown will be making a return to the stage after a long hiatus. Pat and I have worked with deVries in the past so a brief musical reunion may occur. And of course *The Front Desk* with myself, Pat, and Michael Worsa on drums. I like to think I am getting my Bill Graham on by putting this gig together!

RRX: A rock opera can be a pretty massive undertaking. *The Who's Tommy* comes to mind, which was released as a double album, and later had a film adaptation. People hear "rock opera," they think "big." So with *The Front Desk* being at the Low Beat, admittedly a more intimate venue, how do you meet, and exceed, expectations?

NB: We have worked hard on having the music support the lyrical story, it's all about the dynamics and getting into the characters of each particular piece. No song is longer than three minutes, and there are 24 different pieces within *The Front Desk*. Besides Pete Townshend, Pat and I are tremendously influenced by the legendary Mike Watt. His punk rock operas are all three-piece, written on a bass guitar, just like *The Front Desk*. You can get it over as an opera with the right vibe and

sounds from the trio.

RRX: In essence, a rock opera is a story in verse. Some would say poetry is the same, and most of you have roots in both music and poetry. Did the idea to put together *The Front Desk* come from the poet or the musician? And if it's both, how did each of those respective talents come into play on the project?

NB: Poetry definitely tells a story. It may not seem like one to us, but someone will think it is. Pat most certainly has deep roots in both. The story definitely dictates the music. Since Pat wrote this on bass guitar, I have had the freedom and responsibility of creating themes to keep running throughout. I like to imagine what Pete Townshend would do.

RRX: You and Pat Irish seem to be pretty active in Albany Poets. You two are also in the music scene. If you had to contrast the local music scene with the local writing and poetry scene using an atrocious analogy, what would it be?

NB: Albany Poets has been very supportive. We did an acoustic version of *The Front Desk* at Word Fest and Pat has read at various events. The poetry people have way better food and drink than musical events too! The poetry scene is smaller and more intimate than the music scene, so there appears to be a bit more cohesiveness. An atrocious analogy? I will venture the old go together like peas and carrots. But they can be good alone or with other things. You would be surprised how many people don't like peas and carrots comingling.

RRX: What is it about the front desk of a hotel that gives it such a bird's-eye-view of the human condition? The idea that your going with, the pacing of *The Front Desk*, could apply to a lot of places where someone works and waits on customers. In what special way does a hotel showcase the human condition?

NB: One of the things I enjoy most about this piece is that it is relatable and people from every spectrum can identify with the characters and situations. Like any job dealing with the general public, if you watch long enough you can see the walking sociological experience. Also, most everyone has been in a hotel or motel, and have people watched, so that also let's some identifiable emotion come through to the audience, hopefully.

RRX: Here's where you answer the question I didn't ask. Any credits to roll early? And special life hacks? Educate, enlighten, emote... the floor is yours.

NB: First, let me thank you and Radioradiox for giving *The Front Desk* some love. Thanks to the Low Beat for hosting. Albany poets, of course, and anyone who attends the gig, let me thank you advance. One of your earlier questions asked about expectations. Here is my Nick Bisanz theory of expectations, never have any expectations. This way nothing is a surprise. When bad things happen, you don't get to low, because there were no expectations. When good things happen, it helps remind you to appreciate them more.




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Roll Ten to Get the Leviathan Drunk



■ (l-r) Tom Szalowski, Matt Couture and Alex Perry

Photo Credit

Wielding the power of an internet connection and a few choice mics, Swiss Army Scorpion takes listeners into the world of role-playing games... first-person.

By Liam Sweeny

Unless you've spent the 21st century with your head planted firmly in quicksand, you've noticed that nerd-dom, or geekdom, or fandom is hot now. Which goes to figure, since back in your youth (should you be as old as I,) they were the masters of the computers that are now the masters of our social life. You could say some perks are due. Which brings us to Swiss Army Scorpion. A podcast of live role-playing, it shows, I think in the best way, that Dungeons & Dragons has truly come out of the basement. With Gamemaster Alex Perry, and players Joe Twardowski, Matt Couture,

Nick D'Alessandro, Andrew Meager, and Tom Szalowski, Swiss Army Scorpion takes its listeners into the world, and heart, of role-playing games.

We sit down with Alex Perry and discuss my new character, the rum barrel.

RRX: Swiss Army Scorpion is a podcast of a group of six friends playing a version of Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) called Pathfinder. I know myself that when I hear about the different versions, or evolution of D&D through the years, that it feels confusing. How would you describe D&D versions, and Pathfinder specifically, in a nutshell?

AP: Great question! Well, the first thing to understand is that Pathfinder and D&D

are actually completely separate entities, even though they look and feel very similar. D&D is a game owned by a company called Wizards of the Coast, and is currently in the fifth version of the game (D&D 5th edition). Pathfinder is owned by a company called Paizo, and was originally created to play and feel similar to D&D 3rd edition, but will soon move onto its second version (Pathfinder 2nd edition). Each version has its own rule set and mechanics unique to it, with any number of supplement rules, official adventures, monsters, etc. What both games and all versions within (including many many other tabletop role-playing games totally separate from D&D and Pathfinder) share in common is the way in which they're experienced.

Each player is typically in charge of a single character, whose stats, abilities, skills, attacks, spells, etc. are all recorded on their character sheet. While playing the game, they control their character's actions. Many actions require rolling a 20-sided die (d20) and adding the result to a certain bonus depending on how their character is built to determine the range of success in that action. Players may decide to appoint fun personality quirks, strange appearances, and even accents to their characters, and role-play these details during play. One other person takes on the role of Game Master (other games have different labels for this person, like Dungeon Master, Story Teller, etc.). The Game Master, or GM, doesn't have a character or character sheet. Instead, he adjudicates the rules and controls the actions of the monsters the players fight, and role-plays any other characters that might crop up, say when the players ask the local guards about the recent nighttime disturbances in town, or even when they go to the local tavern and order an ale from the barkeep! With all the numbers, mechanics, and dice being rolled, it can sound like a confusing, clunky, and slow experience, but tabletop role-playing games like Pathfinder

and D&D are actually very fluid, relaxing and fun! In its simplest terms, I'd call them interactive, collaborative storytelling experiences.

RRX: Putting gameplay on a podcast is a pretty cool idea. It really shows the fun of the game. Is it something not a lot of people are doing now, or is Swiss Army Scorpion just more visible than others?

AP: Wow, thank you for the benefit of the doubt! In actuality, the kind of show we put on (commonly referred to as an "Actual Play" Podcast) has become increasingly common in the last five or six years; a quick Google search can connect you to hundreds of different Actual Plays. Our little podcast is still finding its place among the giants of the industry, but we're gaining listeners and support at a steady pace.

RRX: Dungeons and Dragons has come out of the perceived nerd culture of the past and entered into popular culture. Do you think it's connected to the rise in popularity of gamer culture in general, or are there other factors people may not be aware of?

AP: That's an interesting question; one that probably has lots of different factors and elements. More qualified people than I could answer this better, but to my personal experience, I'd say that if the rise in popularity of tabletop role-playing games has anything to do with video games, it would actually be in response to video games getting more expensive and more consistently disappointing. Obviously, there are still great video games

to be played, but to spend \$60 on the newest AAA Action/Adventure game, only to find it not worth the money can send people looking elsewhere for their fix of fun and fantasy, and that's to say nothing of the intrusion of micro-transactions into the video gaming lexicon. Most rule books for Pathfinder 1st edition are available as digital PDF's for \$9.99 each, and Paizo allows their rules to be published online for free, if not their prewritten adventures, such as the one we play on the podcast. The number of adventures to be had from a tabletop RPG is limited only by the players' imaginations, while that \$60 video game typically only buys you one play-through. This makes tabletop RPG's a more affordable, longer-lasting investment for gamers; all you really need is an internet connection and some dice.

Another factor fueling this trend is exposure. When interested parties can go online and listen to an Actual Play podcast and hear for themselves what tabletop RPG's are like, it goes a long way to removing the stigma that they're games only for social outcasts. Finding out that a coworker listens to the same Actual Play as you could be all it takes for you to take that leap and join their gaming group for the first time.

This article has been edited for space. Read the full article on the Xperience Blog on Radioradio.com.

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Sharing in the True Power of Music

Watch Reggie Run, where a father and son connect the dots through music, and their listeners are overjoyed.

By Rob Smittix

Dave Graham has been around the local music scene for decades, specifically the punk rock scene. He has had many bands and projects but nothing quite like what he is doing now. I was more than compelled to track him down and ask about his latest project.

RRX: So first off Dave, I have known you for many years and I have had the privilege of sharing the stage with you on multiple occasions. You have been the front-man for several bands including The Blisterz and Legendary Losers but now I see you have a group with your son Luke, tell us about Watch Reggie Run.

Dave: I have a 21 year old son, Luke, who has autism. He is not very verbal but he loves music and is the only one in the family who tolerates my guitar playing and singing! He has a tendency to repeat random words or phrases, many of which I thought I might be able to turn in to songs, so I started keeping a list on my phone. I eventually began writing



Photo by Michele Graham

■ (l - r) Luke and Dave Graham.

kid's themed songs and accumulated enough for a full length album which was our debut entitled *A Little Faster* that we put out in 2017. I would typically write the songs on acoustic guitar and test drive them in Luke's room until I worked out the arrangements. I'd record them in my home studio (aka spare room) that I call 'Thinking Chair Studios' (a nod to Luke's favorite TV show, Blue's Clues) where I'd lay down the basic tracks and then bring Luke in to sing his parts. It often took many many takes and the magic

of digital editing but we had a great time creating these songs!

The band is actually named after my daughter Rory who was nicknamed 'Reggie' by some of her high school track & field teammates. So when Luke and I aren't making music we are usually traveling around the country to various meets to 'Watch Reggie Run'.

RRX: As long as I have known you, you have always been vocal about autism, how do you feel this project will help spread awareness?

Dave: Having a child with autism pretty much makes you an advocate from the day you find out about your child's diagnosis, which in our case was 18 months of age. My hope with these songs

is to show that people with autism can overcome a lot of obstacles and challenges and enjoy life just like the next person. Through social media I have been able to use our music to connect with various members of the autism community around the globe which is really awesome. My ultimate goal however was also to make fun catchy music that appealed to the masses, not just people with disabilities like autism.

RRX: How does it feel to be making music with your son?

Dave: It's such a blast! To see the smile on his face as he is singing along and dancing is just the best feeling in the world. Unfortunately things don't always go as planned, especially with the live performances. Depending on what head space he is in at the time he may or may not join me so I perform some of the gigs solo with just a looping pedal and my acoustic guitar. If we have a big

gig lined up, I will have Luke join us for as many songs as he can handle and also call on my good friends Chris Wisniewski (bass & backing vocals), Derek Dobson (drums) and Kayla Seeley (backing vocals & percussion) to help fill out the sound.

RRX: From what I've heard Watch Reggie Run is children's music but there is a punk rock element in there as well. What gave you the idea in the first place to make music in an almost non-existent genre?

Dave: When Luke was little he used to watch a TV show called The Wiggles, which is an Australian group that incorporates kid's music in to their act. Being a big fan of punk rock, I thought it would be cool to mix what they were doing with the punk rock vibe of bands like Green Day and Bowling for Soup. I wanted to make kid's music that rocked or in other words, children's music that parents can enjoy too!

RRX: I noticed you and Luke recently released a full-length album entitled "To the Bakery" tell us a bit about the album and what to expect?

Dave: We released our 2nd album, "To the Bakery" on all

of the major streaming services in April which coincidentally is World Autism Month. We celebrated by playing a show at Puzzles Bakery & Cafe in Schenectady, an awesome place that employs people with autism and other disabilities. "To The Bakery" is a 12 song collection about diverse topics such as superheroes, library books, animals, and of course, baked goods! In similar fashion to our 1st album, some of the tunes have loud, distorted guitars, banging bass and thundering drums while others are acoustic driven with a bit of an Americana flavor. One thing that they all have in common is a big chorus that you can hopefully sing along with the first time you hear them. My motto is always "Don't bore us, get to the chorus"! The new album also features the talented Kayla Seeley (a classmate of my daughter Rory) as guest vocalist on the title track as well as the song "All the Fruit".

RRX: I am sure being a father and son duo that you are creating some great memories but at the same time spreading autism awareness. What would you say to date would be your proudest accomplishment in this band?

Dave: Over the years I always struggled with trying to write a song about Luke and how we are able to connect through music despite his disability and limited communication skills. I think I finally nailed it with a tune called "Connect the Dots" which was on our 1st album. I am very proud of that one. Every time I play it I find myself fighting back tears. My wife, Michele, also says it makes her cry whenever she hears it. It seems to evoke a lot of emotions and really hits home for us.

RRX: Is there anything else perhaps that you care to share about the band?

Dave: We were contacted by a school teacher in Belgium who asked if we would send him the lyrics to our song "I Wish I Had a

Tail" because he wanted to use it to help teach his students animal names in English. I thought that was pretty rad! Now in concert I often joke that we are HUGE in Belgium!! On the new album I decided to really raise the bar and wrote a song called "One of These Things" that name checks 30 different animals. I'm not sure if he's heard it yet but maybe I should send that teacher the lyrics for that one. LOL!

For more information about Watch Reggie Run visit www.watchreggierun.bandcamp.com
 Upcoming gigs: Freedom Park (Scotia) Saturday July 6th from 7-8:30PM (w/full band). Thursday July 25th from 11AM-Noon Troy Savings Bank Music Hall - Barker Park Kids' Summer Series (Troy).



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My article in May took a lot out of me and I haven't been able to write; You could say I got my panties in a bunch over the whole thing. So, I planned on celebrating National Underwear Day on August 5th with a pun filled article on the history of underwear: from goatskin loincloths and glorified diapers known as subligaculum to shifts and chemises. However, at the last minute I decided to toss my celebration of all styles and shapes of underwear, and just air my dirty laundry. Hello, my name is Fred and I am workaholic.

Most of us work hard, but what makes me a workaholic? A true workaholic is someone who is hiking in the Adirondacks and thinking about work, while the hard worker is in the office dreaming about hiking. I compulsively work hard and long hours – there is always one more email, one more phone call and one more document to complete. Before my feet hit the floor each morning, I am checking emails. I curse the morning traffic, not because of the general inconvenience, but because it is cutting into the time I allocated for my morning projects.

I am working to the exclusion of my family, my marriage and other relationships – my life is out of balance. My family has voiced that they are concerned about my health because of the hours I put in. My one job amounts to three – days, nights and weekends. I try to justify the hours by stating it is my career and not my job and this is the social expectation with my level of

By Fred Aseel

Dirty Laundry



education and industry demands. However, in the back of my mind, I know I need to stop the glorification of busy.

Now, I struggle to have weekends, holidays and family time. I have to fight the internal drive versus what reality actually demands, but when I am not working I feel lost. It is ingrained in me to the point of being an addiction – I can't miss one day, I can't let my clients and customers down and I need to support my co-workers. I am the issue not

the job itself. I feel compelled to be busy. Cellphones (I carry two), laptops, wifi and tablets satisfy my cravings and ensure I can never be out of reach. I sneak in responses to emails at family and school functions when no one is looking like an alcoholic sneaks another drink.

Some would say that by identifying the problem, I have taken the first step. However, my hyper-vigilance won't let me take baby steps. Until I redefine who I want to be, identifying the problem is

just a reminder that I have lost control, and that feeling of 'lack of control' will drive me back to the office. To break this cycle, I am going to put on my big boy panties and head out on a hike to 'work' through some questions: What am I working for? What am I trying to avoid by working so much? What am I missing in life? And, how do I retake my life back? All work and no play makes Fred a dull boy.

Champions of a Bootleg Nation

Super 400 Spreads the love through cell phone cameras and recording devices, and the blessing they give their fans to share.



■ Kenny Hohman (l) and Lori Friday (r)

Photo by Jim Wertman

By Liam Sweeny

Any musician who's gotten past the lottery dreams of fast cars and decadent hotel rooms knows the story of the rock trio Super 400. It's one of cigarette haze, dimmed lights and pick up sessions, trying to find the right fit and the right sound, and of course, hand-blistering jam sessions in nondescript groove stations clad in concrete

and stone-shattered windows. Singer Kenny Hohman, drummer Joe Daley and bassist Lori Friday tour endlessly, making new music classic as soon as it comes out of the speakers, or carries its way to the back of that small club. And they've been doing it since the late nineties. The band has agreed to sit with me to answer a few of my probing questions.

RRX: Super 400 plays internationally as well as locally.

I watched the DMTv segment where you all talked about the feeling of playing Europe. I know that you can't honestly say which fans, U.S. or European, you like best, but can you talk about the norms of let's call it "show etiquette" that exists in Europe, as opposed to the U.S.? For example, do cell phones come out more in Europe than here during concerts?

Lori: I'd like to comment on the fans in Spain, especially. They wear their passions with pride and honesty. The music fans there show their love very openly. We'd never witnessed such a demonstrative reaction to our music – they sing along, pump fists, crowd the stage; and afterward, give hugs and laughter til the sun makes an appearance. There are cell phones, but it seems as though most of them would rather experience the moment with their senses instead of a screen.

We haven't been back to Spain since I had a bad auto wreck in 2011. The fans there still write to us, asking when we are coming back. That kind of love has motivated us to start recording our next record this winter, with an aim to return to Spain, maybe this summer.

RRX: I guess mentioning phones in concerts brings us to another question. Super 400 considers itself a "taper-friendly" band, meaning that you encourage people to tape live shows and trade those tapes. Is that right? If

not, please clarify, and, if so, was this something that came about as a matter of practicality, or is it a purposeful statement about art and performances?

Lori: We've always felt that once our music goes up into the air, it should be available to anyone who wants to hear it. In the days before YouTube, we hadn't started heavy touring yet, and it made us happy to know that bootlegs were being traded. I get excited when I'm able to hear a recorded performance by a band I like. It brings me closer to the them.

RRX: Here's the 'influences' question. I could spend an hour here, because as I am very much in love with blues and classic rock, among other genres, I'd love to swap references. But I like to play with this question. I'd like each of you to mention one group, performer, etc. that's an influence, and tell us one thing about them that few people know but has made you love them even more.

Kenny: Well, I don't think that it is much of a secret to most musicians, but it may not be known by the general public that some of my favorite artists are multi-instrumentalist super heroes! Stevie Wonder, Prince and Paul McCartney come to mind. Any one of them could have made a name for themselves as a non-singing instrumentalist on any number of instruments... and they are the best singers you

could ever hope to hear. Oh, also they wrote some of the best songs of all time. Crazy talent. It's hard to give them more credit than they have already but somehow they really still deserve more!

Lori: I love the magnetism and confidence of David Bowie onstage. The way he connected with his audience, it was like witnessing a purer and more powerful level of being. We saw him at Roseland Ballroom, it just about knocked me off of my feet. It's surely been an influence; I've always tried to shed my insecurities before we step onstage, so that I can be in that precious moment, really experience it. It's such a blessing to have any opportunity to perform.

RRX: Again, one question leading to another. The last

album I could find of yours after exhaustive trawling of the internet was Sweet Fist, in 2009. Your website mentions that you had the album recorded and the vinyl cut at a studio famous for classic rock and other genres. Would you like to comment on that?

Lori: We recorded Sweet Fist at Ardent Studios in Memphis, where Cheap Trick, Issac Hayes, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Big Star, REM, The Replacements, ZZ Top, and so many others have made records. Larry Nix was the mastering engineer there. In his studio resided the famous lathe from Stax Records, the very machine used to cut wax on all the Stax recordings in the 60's and 70's. And, Zeppelin III was cut on it! It sat there, inoperable in Larry's studio, like a museum

artifact. I started bugging him to have the lathe repaired so that we could cut vinyl for the Sweet Fist album. He told me that the parts needed were no longer being manufactured, and that we were out of luck. I trusted my instincts and I became a bit persistent, which paid off. A couple weeks later, Larry told us that he had found someone who would supply the parts needed. Before long, we were back in Memphis, witnessing the lathe in action, cutting grooves in wax.

We videoed the whole thing, it was like watching sorcery! That was a magic time. There's a cool article about the lathe, here: <https://www.prosoundnetwork.com/prosound-news-blog/1636>

RRX: This is where I harness the power of social media. You all

have seen bands out there that are top shelf, but maybe haven't had so much success in building a buzz. What bands locally are the bands that everyone must see once? Who should I be looking to interview in the future?

Kenny: The best new band I have seen locally recently is Motorbike, Mike O'Donnell's band. They will be opening for us at Hangar on the Hudson Dec. 8th.

Solo artist Steve Candlen is also amazing.

This article has been edited for space. Read the full article at the Xperience Blog at www.radioradiox.com.



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Every Hard Road Bears a Muse

Photo Provided



Stephanie
Levay

RRX: Speaking of going through something, it wasn't that long ago that you've gone through some trying times yourself.

Stephanie: Which chapter?

RRX: Well you know, being in-between places with kids. How did you this affect you as a person, a mother and an artist?

Stephanie: I've always lived very poorly, not only out of circumstance but by choice, I've never chased money. So unfortunately when the really bad stuff happens and money is crucial to have I don't have it. I suffer more from it. I already had that mindset of sacrifice, I've dealt with this before and I've gone without before. I always make sure I have whatever I need for the kids. And if I've got worn out shoes then I've got the worn out shoes and they have the new ones or at least passed-along, found or somehow acquired.

It was harder on me, going through that than it was on the kids. My kids are very resilient, I've raised them to understand that life is sometimes very hard. And they have to face things bravely and to know they have me. I have to be stable for them... And always let them know that I am there for them, no matter what I can't ever fail them. That's the motivation I can't fail them. So you go through it, you get through it and you just do it.

Being homeless in a shelter is degrading, it was a life that I knew existed and how people are treated. So I knew what I was about to

By Rob Smittix

Stephanie Levay has become a very recognizable artist in the Albany art-scene. She has displayed her artwork in shops in and around the Lark Street area for years. You may have even driven or walked by a mural or two that she has painted. I have been waiting for the opportunity to speak with Stephanie about life and art and I finally had my chance.

Stephanie: I think in art and in most media forms the person becomes the thing that they're doing. They forget that they're human like everybody else too. There's always that image. I'm sure Beyoncé can rip a good one, right? (Laughter) We all have to remember that we all have our stories, we all came from somewhere, we all went through something and we all are dealing with something.

*Artist
Stephanie
Levay draws
inspiration from
everywhere that will
let her leave her mark.*

head into but boy... when you're actually in it, it's disgusting how we treat the weaker of our people. There were so many fights I wanted start with staff about how people were being treated and I couldn't... I had to stay silent because I was there too. And it was a retaliatory system going on, where if the staff doesn't like you, you were screwed out of the resources that you are entitled to have and that you are promised to have there. They made everything really hard.

On the outside, getting around and not having an actual way to get around. And not being able to sit in my art, so to speak. To be at my desk and have my art supplies and my tools ready to make whatever my brain comes up with. Which is, I am a complete idea factory and everything is coming at me all the time. Three o'clock in the morning, I'll think of something, by 5 o'clock I've created something. When the kids wake up, they're like 'what's this?' I'm like, 'I don't know I just made it overnight, I was bored.' And I didn't have that and it drove me nuts. The kids had a playground and new friends, they were alright and they were a lot stronger about it than I was. I needed to kind of suck it in for myself and mirror it back. I am strong too okay, we're going to get through this but when they were sleeping and I was awake, not around my art supplies, not being able to have everything I've built up for twenty years, not even my cats for comforting; that just ate me alive.

I did not let that stop me. I had four shows in December that I pulled off. I went to the storage

units, picked out all of the paintings and got it all to the galleries. I got my kids back and forth from the shelter to the school. I never let that fail because I never want my kids to see, that just because you're going through something, you drop what's important. You know, you've got to keep going on. This is your dream, fight through all the stuff and you'll finally get there. So a lot of determination, and a heck of a lot of stubbornness. I do that self-inflicted, I'll say I've got a show and I'm coming out with a brand-new series. I'll post it and that locks me in.

RRX: Yes it does, it's a commitment.

Stephanie: I have to come through on it now and I make myself do that. These kids have seen me pull off all of these shows since they were babies. I've had one strapped on the front, one strapped on the back baby carriers. Made up a tart package of paintings and went up and down the hills of Albany putting up all of the shows. They've been at the shows with me, they know what this life is about. They're very respectful about that. I want them to see that I never failed at what is very important to me.

I'm coming up on some things. We've had our proud dances in the living room. Like when we did the art gallery and I was on the news for it and interviewed for it. My kids saw the interview and it's the proudest moment I've ever had in my life and my oldest was turning around and saying "Mom, I'm so proud of you, I'm so happy for you, this is what you've always wanted." I've never felt that kind of pride before

without this lingering doubt or this unsure feeling. But I've never felt so strong about something in all of my life, seeing my children be proud of me for something, I know that's going to create a memory and an ethic in them when they go on to do what they want to do when they get older.

RRX: So you have two kids?

Stephanie: James is my oldest and William is five.

RRX: So I caught it on social media about one of your children writing a letter to a stranger and I thought it was the coolest story.

Stephanie: William wanted to give a letter to a stranger. It was really kind of late at night but he was determined. He was like 'we're going to write a letter because it will make somebody feel good.' It was like, you are special, you are important, we care about you, I love you and can we be friends? Or something. So we sat out on the porch and a guy came up, for a half-second I was kind of weary he because he was walking up kind of drunk. I'm like of course, great, yay Albany. William said that's who the letter is for. I was like alright let's do this and I walk down and said I'm sorry sir but my son has this letter and he would like to give it to you. He looks at us like we're crazy. I'm looking at him telepathically like can you just oblige the four year old and take the letter?

RRX: Wow, he was only four when he did this.

Stephanie: Yeah, he was four. So the guy took it and he opened it up and of course William wrote

Continued on Page 37...

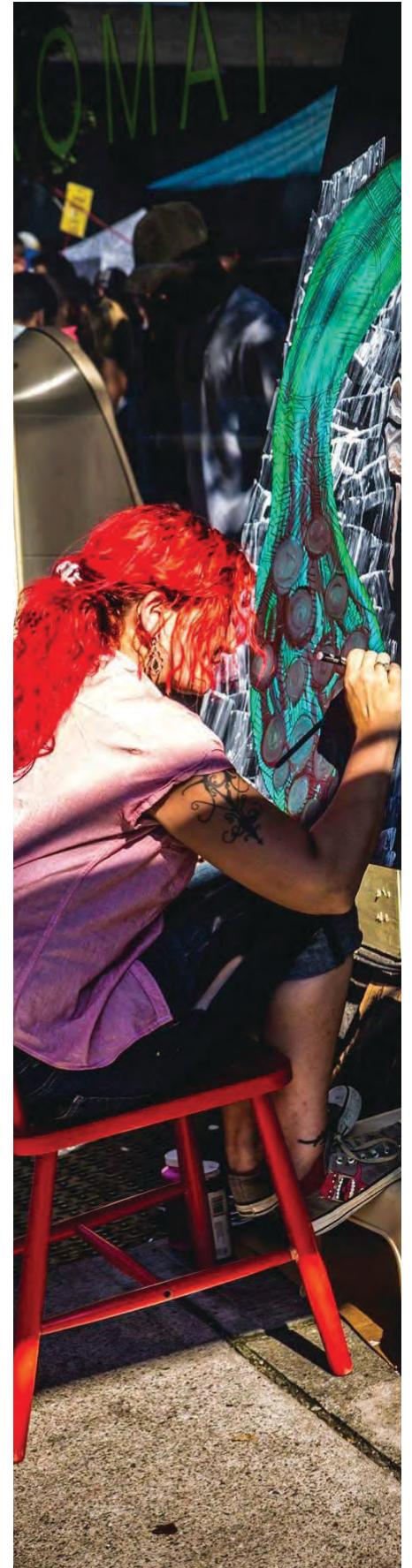


Photo provided.

Putting Music Into New Hands

Musician and educator Graham Tichy teaches eager students the ways of rhythm and melody and immerses them in real-world performance.

By Liam Sweeny

I love versatility, especially in music. Don't get me wrong; it's an admirable trait. But mainly I like it because my attention span makes gnats seem deliberate. Mix it up, friends and neighbors. That's why I got involved in RadioradioX. And that is also why I dig Graham Tichy.

Coming from a musical family, the son of Commander Cody and his Lost Planet Airmen founding member John Tichy, Graham Tichy is the captain of any jukebox in any diner that sells a good short stack. With a natural flow and a seemingly effortless way of coaxing out fury from a six-string, you have wonder if music is yet another genetic predisposition.

I sit down with my ham sandwich and talk turkey with Graham.

RRX: Most musicians, specifically those who cover songs, are always aiming for that repertoire, of songs, that is. But as I've heard you play, your repertoire is one of whole genres. Did you set out to explore the musical landscape from the beginning, or was there a "first love" genre off of which everything branched?

GT: I've not always had an affinity for older music. Outside



Photo provided.

■ Graham Tichy is a co-founder of the Troy Music Academy.

of awkward attempts at playing contemporary music in middle school and high school, I am relatively knowledgeable about music created after 1967. I remember having cassettes of the Atlantic

Rhythm and Blues box set, Buddy Holly's Greatest Hits, Chuck Berry's Great Twenty-Eight, and Little Richard's Greatest Hits. But without a doubt, I fell in love with the Beatles HARD when I first

started playing guitar, around age 10. My father worked in France for summers at a time, and there was little to do to entertain myself there (when we weren't sightseeing - it wasn't so bad!), with the exception of an acoustic guitar and a book of Beatles songs. I remember being able to play and sing almost everything in that book by 6th grade. I'm really glad that I started with the Beatles. My musical taste ends there chronologically, and I've been working my way earlier ever since.

When I was old enough to start playing gigs I was REALLY in to rockabilly music. It's probably what I'm best at playing, and I'd be remiss to not mention it. The Capital District was such a great area to grow up playing that music, with Mark Gamsjager from the Lustre Kings and Johnny Rabb taking me under their wings almost instantly. As I dug deeper into that style, I realized that the key to playing with authenticity is to learn not just the licks from the recordings, but to learn what those players learned as well to arrive at that point. This begins the endless journey into earlier and earlier guitar styles.

RRX: I imagine there are two gigs. One gig, you get to really explore one genre all day or night, dig into those super deep cuts. The other gig you get to bounce from one genre to the next and dip your hands in all those

different paint buckets. All other things equal, I have two gigs in my hand, one of each. Which one do you take?

GT: Tough question. On one hand, if I play one style all night long, I can dig deeper, like you said. I can get more interesting guitar tones, and for myself to explore. But if it were my last gig on earth, I'd want to play everything I know! I honestly can't answer this question with any conviction. Thank goodness I get to play in both situations, or I'd probably go crazy!

RRX: I'm sure you get asked about your father, John Tichy a lot, and I wouldn't, but my dad grooved to Commander Cody around the crack of '70, so, much love from the Sweeny fam. Now I know you two rock out once in a while. Did he put a guitar in your hands when you were a toddler, or did you steal his when you were a teenager? Which is more accurate?

GT: My parents were generous enough to buy me a red Epiphone Strat for Christmas one year, and many years of guitar lessons after that. Both my parents have been extremely supportive of my musical exploration. That said, I certainly have stolen a guitar or two out of my father's hands! And any rebellious teenager worth his salt has heard "Turn down that infernal racket!" many times outside their bedroom wall!

RRX: I'm blown away by what I've heard of yours. Just some real flow. And I'm always looking for that new groove, that knew soundscape. I love it when a capable player can breathe life into

a classic, and I understand the value of it. But I'm looking for the originals. Is there a project in the works of original songs? Or was there, and it's just hiding in plain sight?

GT: I've written some songs over the years, mostly for my band Rocky Velvet, but I've never considered myself much of a songwriter. It's mostly been for utilitarian purposes - "we need an original song for XXX purpose." I've never been the type to express myself through poetry or anything like that.

Interestingly, I've been digging deep into the Hawaiian steel guitar and writing music on that instrument. Learning that instrument over the last three years made things fresh and fun again. My band, The Swingin' Palms has an EP of original music coming out on Hi-Tide Recordings in June. The new confidence in songwriting has spilled into other styles now, and a good chunk of my practice time now is spent writing.

RRX: You're one of the owners of the Troy Music Academy. I have heard the name here and there, and I'm certain that I need to know all about it, especially if I'm going to do well at this job. So, if you could tell us about it. What should the musicians who read this blog know, and when should they know it?

GT: About 8 years ago Kenny, Lori (both from Super 400), and I opened the Troy Music Academy (TMA) with the sole intention of offering the best music instruction possible. As we've grown as a business, we've added only the best teachers we could find. I can

say, with 100% sincerity, that everyone at the TMA puts their heart and soul into their work. If anyone is looking to start exploring an instrument, or even if they are a seasoned pro looking to "sharpen the saw," we are there to see you to your goals.

RRX: As a music instructor, you see all types of people, with different abilities, talents and attitudes. Not everybody will graduate the Academy to become a professional musician. And those that do, not all of them will go out and take over the stage. What, in your experience, most stops a person from achieving what they set out to in music?

GT: I would say, without a doubt, the biggest factor is sustaining a consistent effort over a long enough period of time. I

know that's very generalized, but that's what it comes down to almost every time. There are very few people who lack the talent level required to become respectable musicians, but it's the very few who put in the necessary time to do it. As they say, "talent is hard work in disguise."

RRX: I like to use this last question to give you to answer any question I didn't ask. Shout outs, coming attractions – anything you want people to know – the floor is yours.


GT: I'm playing the Brunswick Concerts with The Tichy Boys 8/6. 8/16 The Swingin' Palms are playing a big surf music festival in Asbury Park. Bands from as far as Japan in that one.



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Horsepower is more than a measure; it's a gateway. The horse changed humankind in a way that allowed Ghengis Khan to unite a continent. We hopped on the backs of horses and we shrunk our world. Horses so revolutionized us that when we gave them up for the next power, we could only describe it in terms of four hooves; it's horsepower.

But this is a music, art and culture publication. We claim no special equestrian understandings that extend beyond the lucky hunch of a betting ticket. But we know about power. We know about the power to move people by their hearts by blowing their minds with a tasty guitar riff. We know we have the power to drive lovebirds together at a summer festival or make an old man young again because a bar singer sounds like a busker he heard when he came back from the War.

And there is a power that drives the drivers, a pure, almost mystical translation by which lightning travels from a wire to a conjuring box, where a druid with patches on her jean jacket swings an axe and casts incantations in tones and rhythms out into the ears of all assembled.

Horsepower

How magical it is that one of the planet's fundamental forces can be wrought through transistors or vacuum tubes into a rockabilly jam, or the full-on assault of a punk classic. Even without the electric, we harness the wind and the air, and deftly reshape them into pure expression.

Horse and rider transcends the sport; it is a symbiosis of the yearning for exploration and the vehicle of that exploration. It's more than just rider and beast; it's a companionship, a merging of inner strength that, should it be commodified, would wilt to lesser notions and be trampled underfoot.

We celebrate the product of life and the products of craft, and as jockey on thoroughbreds, the artist clings to the brush, the musician clings to the amp and the writer the pen, and the power contained within becomes harnessed by creative passion until the ring of inspiration opens the gates.

Shooting the Breeze with Buck Dharma

Blue Öyster Cult guitarist and original member Buck Dharma shares his long journey with our very own over a Cajun Shrimp dinner.

By Rob Smittix

Growing up I heard stories from my Dad about the days when Donald Roser (Buck Dharma) and my uncle Edward “Skip” O’Donnell would jam. The fact that such a legendary guitarist has musical roots in this area but also ties to my family had intrigued me since I was a kid. It has been on my bucket list for a very long time to just meet the guy and have a conversation. On June 27th when Blue Öyster Cult came to play at Albany’s newest music venue, The Skyloft, I finally had the chance. Was it an interview? Kind of but really more of chat that I just always wanted to have and I am glad I get to share it with you.

After listening to the band warm up I was summoned through the back stage area and into the green room where the band was enjoying a meal. Buck Dharma emerged from the rest of the band and crew, he extended his hand and asked, “Are you Skippy’s cousin?” I answered “nephew.” From here we took our talk into a more secluded area for noise reduction.

Buck: It’s really nice to talk to you. I was really fond of your uncle you know? I haven’t talked to Skip in a while. He’s got to be retired by now.

RRX: He is retired. Unfortunately, he is battling Parkinson’s.

Buck: He had just beaten esophagus cancer last time I saw him. Next time you talk to

him, give my love. I always hold those days in my heart. We had a good crew in those days. We met at Clarkson, of course back in 65’. In Traversity, the band we were all in together, we had a fine time. In fact we did some club work in Albany too. He was the obvious choice for singer because he didn’t need a PA.

RRX: Wow, he must have really projected, I couldn’t even imagine that. He must’ve had some pipes.

Buck: I knew Skip’s Dad too.

RRX: Do you remember when you painted “Love” on the roof of his house?

Buck: I did something like that.

RRX: I imagine it was for the planes to see.

Buck: Yeah, we were in the flight-path.

RRX: Now this was my grandparent’s house, and I don’t know about then but from what I know they were always pretty old-school and strict.

Buck: When we went to school in the dawn of the hippie era, they were pretty square. (Laughs) Skip told a story, “The



Photo Provided

Buck Dharma (r) hanging out with Rob Smittix (l)

Mothers of Invention”, Frank Zappa, record that he played in his room and the song “Brown Shoes Don’t Make It” came on. That was too much for your Grandpa, he took the record off and broke it on his knees.

RRX: That’s funny.

Buck: Yeah it was.

RRX: So in your time in Upstate New York there’s got to be some kind of vivid memory that pops out.

Buck: Well, I’m in and out of the Capital District but... I met my wife in college, Potsdam. She’s from Rome, so I’ve gone back there all of these years. I’ve lived in Ithaca in the mid 80’s through the early 90’s.

My daughter and her husband are just buying a house in Ithaca right now, so I'll be going back there to visit them.

RRX: Yeah, Upstate New York is not so bad. You know, everyone complains about the taxes.

Buck: I live in Maryland now, they have high taxes there. I came from Florida before that. Getting killed over there so... I moved out of Florida because I'm a grandpa, I wanna see my grandkids grow up. Got to be near them. I'm a Northeasterner at heart.

RRX: So rumor has it there's new music coming?

Buck: Yeah, we just committed to making another record. This band has never been recorded with these members, so I'm excited about that.

RRX: After all these years, do you feel like you have to do it? Is

it more for the fans or yourself?

Buck: I don't think we dream of big stardom again but the fans wanna hear it. And we're doing it for posterity, ya know?

RRX: Makes sense.

Buck: It took a while for me to get the cobwebs out, for a while I haven't really written much. Maybe five songs in the last decade. So I felt like the King of Rohan, Lord of the Rings, get the cobwebs off of ya!

RRX: And it's coming from the place that gave you so many hits.

Buck: Whelp, we're into it now.

RRX: For all the accomplishments you've already had, was this just something that had to be done?

Buck: I feel very lucky of the success we've had, the recognition and the culture too.

RRX: How's it feel to have been at this for fifty plus years?

Buck: I never expected it of course, the entire arc of my life has sort of been unplanned. But for me it's one thing to another... I thought I'd do it for a few years and get a real job. I wouldn't even know where to begin to succeed in today's music business.

RRX: It's a whole new world out there, it's like the internet helps and it hurts at the same time.

Buck: Right, you have to ride the horse in the direction it's going. Although I think the streaming services are where it's at. I don't need the physical kind of thing, I used to really love getting LP's and all that.

RRX: The whole DIY process is kind of the way to go now, wasn't always the case but...

Buck: Well it's hard to be

an engineer and an artist at the same time. Your creative stuff gets derailed because this routing is wrong or... Especially with computers compared to the old analog days.

Door opens a crack and a voice says, "Donald your food is ready." Next thing you know some dinner is served and it looks mighty delicious.

RRX: What ya got there?

Buck: Cajun shrimp, rice and broccoli of some sort. Broccolini or something. (Laughs) It's fancy broccoli.

RRX: So at this point it doesn't look like Blue Oyster Cult is stopping anytime soon.

Buck: I think the light's on at the end of the tunnel but we still sound really good. The demand is there, seems silly to not to honor it so... If I ever can't play I'll stop. At some point I'll stop anyway because I don't have the energy I did when I was a young man. You know the traveling is the worst of it, it's not playing; playing is fun.

RRX: Absolutely. So anything else on your mind? Like me, I have been trying to grasp the concept of the number One Trillion. Did you know that it would take over Thirty-One Thousand years to count to a trillion?

Buck: Like if you start at one and just go up?

RRX: Yeah, you just keep going; obviously impossible to achieve.

Buck: And you'd lose your place too.

RRX: Also that in-space telescope that we recently lost contact with, was said to have

■ Blue Öyster Cult performing in Albany in June.

Photo provided.



Continued on Page 36...

The Art of Getting It Out There

From the 80s Albany punk rock scene to the vinyl scene today, Last Vestige owner, Jim Furlong, talks about his long history of making things happen.



Photo provided.

■ Jim Furlong at Valentines Music Hall (w. Frank Novko)

By Liam Sweeny

Some people think that vinyl records are nothing but nostalgia, and I imagine they say the same thing about tube amps and basically any

musical thing that isn't bouncing binary to the tune of an algorithm. And they're right. It is nostalgia. But so is music. Music is memories, and new music is marking future memories as we speak. Vinyl gives a solid, touch

it, feel it remembrance of times that only it can truly bring you back to.

Jim Furlong sells vinyl. And he's made vinyl, and he's made the music that could find no better home than a 7" single. A singer for local band The A.D.s and The Trash Knights, owner of Last Vestige Music, Jim's heart beats at 33 1/3 rpm.

I sit down with Jim and we talk about optical illusions in album art.

RRX: In researching you, I, of course, came across your band, The A.D.s, which go back to one of the Capital District's golden era, the 1980's. Being an 80s kid myself, I remember things just changing every day, from the state of the world to the state of the art. If either state drove the scene more, which would you say it was?

JF: I'd say both. Worldwide, the state of the USA in the late 70s was a bit of a mess; unemployment, high interest rates. Iran Embassy, oil prices, feckless president, socialism and communism on the move. People on both sides of the arguments were fed up.

Artistically, music was getting quite corporate and saccharine. Arena rock, soft rock, the big groups became removed from the fan base that was hungry for more grit, more rhythm, more audacity and less pomp.

RRX: Now the A.D.s were put

to vinyl first by your own independent label, Blue Lunch. Then, the technology for DIY production was newly accessible. Can you think of anything you all did back then that set the tone for how it's done now? Anything you did that should have set the tone now but didn't?

JF: The whole DIY thing was new and exciting, though it's been around for years. There are so many bands from the 60's and 70's that put their own 45 or LP out. For me it was a learn as you go process. Art Snay of Arabelum and Mark Ernst of MCE were very helpful in prepping tapes for acetates and test pressings, as well as making connections to small pressing plants. I have commercial art background which helped with creating the cover art and preparing it for printing. It's so different now... the technology of recording and printing. I'd say how we all did it is primitive now and only the DESIRE to DIY has marched on with downloading, YouTube and other tech ways to send the music out to the masses.

RRX: Staying on DIY for a second round. You own Last Vestige, a store known for selling vinyl records and accessories for record players, among other things. If my garage band wants to follow in Blue Lunch's footsteps and press a single, or a full album, how can it be "garage affordable" or can it even be?

JF: I plead ignorance. I haven't been involved with a DIY pressing since 2003 when I released the EXTRA'S CD commercially. That was big learning curve there too. Trying to promote a local band that no longer existed as a archeological piece of Albany punk rock history beyond the small community who knew the band, was a lot of work and really didn't get too far.

RRX: So, the Good Word from behind the Last Vestige counter: who's in vinyl? Not so much the specific bands, but do you see any trends, say, genres of music that are more represented under the needle than others? Do the Big X labels dominate this market, like every other one, or is there an upswell of indie?

JF: Modern hip hop, indie

rock seem to be big on vinyl as well as reissues of rare classic rock, reggae, avant garde/ electronic, punk, funk, jazz. And most big commercial artists have a batch of vinyl released. I'm not seeing a lot of modern jazz, country or folk and mainstream RnB/ soul coming out. The big labels I've heard started hogging the schedules of the limited amount of pressing plants with their releases and indies were having to wait months. But I hear some new plants have opened and the slack has been taken up better now.

RRX: Blue Lunch had a magazine for a little while. Obviously, I'm walking in well-worn footsteps in my own efforts here, so I'm definitely curious. Newsrooms have their own

atmosphere, even if the "room" is a card table by a back-alley dice game. What was that feeling like the first day after the latest issue came out?

JF: Blue Lunch was a one-man operation with local volunteers writing articles and reviews as well as myself writing under fake names so it wasn't always "Jim Furlong" LOL. I spent hours pasting the cut out typed stories, b&w photos and illustrating on large boards and taking them to a long-gone printer at the corner of Eagle St. and State St. to print, collate and staple. That first issue was a big achievement for me. NY Rocker took notice and I was able to write a couple of articles for them as a result. I had scotch taped a penny to each copy as a rebate for purchasing. Yes unlike

all the free rags, I charged 50 or 60 cents for it and people DID buy it. And I had some cheap advertising too. All the money pretty much paid for the printing. It was at Worlds Record, Fantaco, Bleeker Bob's in NYC and anywhere that would have it. Peter Zaremba of the Fleshtones even wrote to discuss my review of their first 12". A snarky editor for Trouser Press thought it was funny to write back and say he found that the penny was worth money and sold it. Other than that loser, it was well received by a lot of fanzine publications. After 3 issues, I was kind of burnt out and moved on to other things and then the A.D.'s moved to NYC area to try and make it BIG LOL.

RRX: You've been a moving

Continued on Page 35...



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Words With a Collar City Scribe

Local author Erik Carucci speaks to his process, his worlds, and the landscape of independent media

By Liam Sweeny

Writing's a bitch... believe it. You're in the studio for months and it's basically your house, or the bus, or if you're of a sort, the local coffee shop. No one seems to care, your backup band is... there is none. And your groupies probably won't have you signing body parts with a marker.

Erik Carucci took the plunge into the sea of metaphor like a surfer of similes and he came in from the surf with *Sempre Amore*, a book which has injected the supernatural into a city many of us are proud to call home, including Uncle Sam.

I sit down with Erik and we discuss the best time to kill off your main character.

RRX: *Sempre Amore* mixes a dark fantasy element involving immortal characters with a fictionalized Troy. As you were writing, did you have anything in mind that guided you?

Erik: Like a lot of art, pain and heartache can lead to amazing creativity. I screwed up and lost my shot at being with someone I adored. It took the wind



■ Author Erik Carucci

Photo provided.

out of my sails for a bit. After a spell, I knew ridding myself of the stress and angst was priority one. Moreover, it had to occur without eventually donning the proverbial orange jumpsuit. I tried the physical angle but weapons training, weightlifting, and hitting the bag just wasn't cutting it. Then, I remembered a bit of advice from a friend. "You can write, so just put those strong feelings onto the page and free your mind." It worked and at some point, I noticed the tale coming together. Four months later, I had a very rough draft and showed it to my devilish confidante. It took off from there. At this time, the story had no location and it could have taken place anywhere in

the world. Once dwelled upon, I knew the best canvas was Troy. This uncanny and wild little city has fueled my imagination since birth. I just had to stretch her out and give the characters room to roam. Mixing the city's history with fiction was natural because the city has reached that age where myth and reality have become intertwined.

RRX: A lot of people want to know about a writer's process. Okay, fine. I'm "a lot of people." Someone comes up to you, says "I can write a book!" and wants your recipe, what are you jotting down for them?

Erik: The best advice, always be ready for stray thoughts. While an outline is a major

component, the true substance of your story may come at impromptu times. You could be driving, mowing the lawn, or making dinner. All of a sudden, an idea or a great sentence wanders into your mind. When it happens, don't wait or put it off till later. As soon as possible, write it down (even if all you have is a crayon and napkin) or text yourself. It may not seem to fit, but if your mindset is constantly on creation, it probably will at a different timeframe. That's where my process comes in. I didn't go to school for this. My way is self-taught, skewed, and may not be for everybody. For me, it's a jigsaw puzzle. You start on the edges (the beginning), but at times, you're putting together odd pieces that fit together (middle or elsewhere). Often, I will write the first couple of chapters and an ending randomly appears. Of course, I immediately write it down. So, I have A & Z written, now I just have to bridge the gap between them. That's how "*Sempre Amore*" came to life. My next novel is shaping up in a similar fashion.

RRX: You published your book yourself. Did the Big-Five publishers just key your car or something? Did you have expectations when you self-published that didn't pan out? Any unexpected luck?

Erik: Before I was referred to self-publishing by a friend and writing mentor, I looked

into dealing with the publishing houses. Their requirements were daunting and discouraging. Cover letter, synopsis, sample, detailed outline, and even more hurdles that make me gag when dwelled upon. Basically, if you didn't have an "in", you had to do another month's worth of work with no guarantees. I xeroxed, correlated, and bound two packets for two different houses. I never heard from either of those ballonheads. Despondent, I was about to shelf it. Then, self-publishing introduced herself. It's a great process and I have no regrets. Honestly, I don't see why anyone would deal with the super five.

RRX: It seems that independent media and corporate media are in a battle for America's soul. How does independent media, indie publishing, everything else... how does it win? How do we topple Goliath?

Erik: We don't want to topple Goliath, we want to saddle that leviathan like remora on a shark. Symbiosis should be our ultimate goal. The idea is to be independent and use their access for mutual interest. As much as this pains the most ardent maverick, our best friend is Amazon. Amazon is changing the game and if the publishing houses don't adjust their ways, they will end up being forgotten and discarded. Amazon allows you to have the freedom to write what you want and control the content. With the cover creator and format tools, it's a no-brainer for someone who just wants to write and not get bogged down with logistics. It's a

very inexpensive process because your work is print to order. You decide the price and compensation is fair. No warehouses of dusty volumes unless you wish to invest your capital in that fashion. There are also two incredible benefits. Your work is uploaded onto a database that will probably survive until this rock gets cooked. However, the biggest is sharing your work with the world. The last I checked, my book could be translated into twenty-two different languages. You have to admit, that's cool.

RRX: You sat down and did something very difficult and intensely personal, and you've had to ask people to invest days of their time on your imagination. What did you most learn for inception to reception?

Erik: There's a quote at the end of my book that reads; "To write is to be naked before the world." This is the last major hurdle in publishing. Do I want anyone to read this? Will they like it or be offended? And of course, do I want people to see some of my deepest thoughts and feelings? For me, I had to be genuine. It's who I am, no matter the consequences. With that frame of mind, my book had to allow others to see me in the brightest light. Once I decided, "Yeah, I'm doing this", I wanted it to be right and that took long hours and patience. Writing about what you know and being honest will always connect with readers. Stephen King and the state of Maine can attest to that.

I love my city and this is a

Continued on Page 36...





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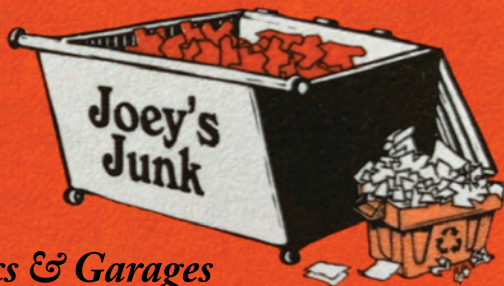


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Guy?

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That poem you
Wrote the young millennial
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I inquire
You know
That one about
Dying without her
Love & sadness
Loss & self
Destruction

That one
Y'know
"Come As You Are"

I smile
Take a sip of my
Coffee, excuse myself
From the room

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On July 14th, the coolest of the cool descended on Chrome Food & Spirits in Waterford to celebrate the One Year Anniversary Show for Radioradiox.com. A great mix of bands showed up and memories were made.

Speaking of memories... We'd like to take the time out to recognize the men and women who go out to immortalize these great times.

The photographs on the previous page were taken by Stephanie Bartik, Amy Modesti and Ed Conway. They are the unsung heroes of the Capital Region music scene.

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Ramblings and Observations From a Cranky Old Guy

By Jeff Spaulding

Before we get to the topic of THIS issue, a follow up note of sadness to the LAST issue, where I spoke of the demise of WPLJ in New York.

Since that time, legendary Top 40 radio station WABC in New York (now a News/Talk station) has been sold, for a measly (in broadcast terms) \$12.5 million.

WABC was the Top 40 standard all other stations followed, the music, the jingles, the DJs.

Harry Harrison, Dan Ingram, Cousin' Brucie.

WABC in 1964 became W A Beatle C, and never looked back... RIP.

Now, this issue is going to be juicy, and ONLY scratches the surface of my 40 plus year professional career in broadcasting.

Let's talk about radio listeners.

Most are fine upstanding citizens.

A good number are out right nut jobs, serial killers, and possible (at minimal) Level Two's.

And some, I presume, are good people... (sorry, stole that from the guy with the funky hair in Washington.)

Let's mention a few, without specific call letters or real names.

I'll start in Ohio, where my professional broadcast career began in 1977.

Point of fact, as a coincidence,

the first woman I married (now known as Ex Wife Number One) was introduced to me while listening to my all-night radio show.

I got off work at 6 AM, picked up a 12 pack, met her, and "got off work" about an hour later.

We were married six months later.

We did NOT have to.

We divorced two years later.

When we met, I was 23, she was 19.

Do the math.

Ask any Old School radio person if their career was like that.

If they say no, they are going to hell for lying.

Working at this same radio station, and the same shift (the freaks DO come out at night), and BEFORE I met EW#1, a female listener calls me, we chat and she says let's meet at a bar after my shift for a drink.

At 6 AM.

Right then I should have noticed the problem.

But I'm young, stupid and horny, I meet her, and discover the woman has a hair lip.

You read that right.

I could have parked my old VW bug in the space, she was THAT much of a hair lip.

But I say "For God and Country" and start downing the alcohol.

After a brief chat I start yawning and say "Well it was very nice

to meet you but I need to get out of here."

She asks for a ride home.

As if the hair lip wasn't a clue enough.

Being the nice guy that I am, I agree, I bring her to her Section Eight apartment complex, say my goodbyes, but she says "You're coming in with me."

She proceeds to pull a knife out of her purse the Crips and Bloods would fight over.

As she opens the door, (I was younger and in MUCH better shape) I pull a James Bond, pull up my legs and push her ass out, hitting the gas like I'm Tony Stewart.

Again, that story is COMPLETELY true.

As is this next one.

It takes place in the Capital District (that's ALL I will tell you).

I was working 7-midnight, and followed by a young and dumb radio newbie who ONLY wanted to get into radio because she wanted to do EVERY member of Duran Duran.

One night come midnight she's not there (did I mention she used to slut herself up and hit the clubs before her shift, and change right in front of me in the studio?).

At 12:15 I call my boss, who has to do the morning show at 5:30, he asks me to hang till one, and if she's still not there call him

(we were all live radio then, no computers)

Shortly after that she comes in, drunk and stoned, and introduces me to a BIG woman who calls herself "Throbbin' Robin," who is also drunk and stoned.

I decide to stay a bit.

To condense this, they both kept hitting on me, then ripped off their tops and drew smiley faces on their boobs with magic markers.

I decide that's my cue, I leave, a couple hours later the boss comes in (station off the air and he can't reach anyone).

He finds "Throbbin' Robin" passed out in the lobby, half naked, with a hand thrust thusly in her pants.

He finds the baby jock in the Control Room the exact same way.

Find me a state employee with working conditions like this.

Again, these stories are ALL true.

And I'm just getting started.





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Being Safe While Exploring Bondage



By Sassy

Sassy Says

****Disclaimer:** This article relates to safe, sane, and consensual BDSM. It does not encourage, promote, or condone -- pedophilia, abuse, or rape. None of this article's content is unlawful, harmful, threatening, abusive, harassing, tortious, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, libelous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful, or racially/ethnically objectionable. This article is for tolerant, open minded adults only. (You know who you are.) **

At some point in your life, you have probably heard the term "bondage." But do you realize that bondage goes WAY beyond just tying up a person's hands or feet? To start, bondage doesn't have to be a part of a sexual act. It can actually be a stand alone practice for pleasure. That being said, what else do you need to know?

Although bondage and sex can work together, bondage tends to be more about the excitement of empowerment. The sexual charge that someone gets from binding or being bound can generate an intense feeling. This in turn can give a euphoric high that can result in an physical "release". With a new generation that desires different ways of sexual expression, people are looking for not just

new positions or toys, but also new ideas that are well outside of the box.

Bondage may be a new term to some, but the fact is that bondage can be traced back as far as the 9th century B.C. when ritualistic whippings were used for pleasure. Even the Indian work known as the Kama Sutra shows how things like bondage can play a part of one's natural sexual behavior. BUT IT ALSO STRESSES that with ANY category of BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism & masochism) and/or sexual act, these practices should only be done with/on persons who understand what is happening and are willing to submit themselves to such treatment.

So, can you explore these things and still stay safe? Absolutely. Here are a few tips to remember as you begin to explore the world of bondage:

Safety is first, last and ALWAYS. Make sure everyone is on the same page, what you want to do is safe, and you have a plan if something goes wrong. This is not an adventure where you want to push limits. Keep things close by that might be necessary

if something does go wrong—a pair of scissors to cut ties or ropes, keys to any handcuffs and of course a phone in case you do need to dial 911.

Know your limits and talk about them out loud. Everyone is different. What might be hot for someone may be terrifying for someone else. Assume nothing! And just because you saw someone do it in a photo does not mean it can be done with your partner.

Yes, have a safe word. Not everyone realizes that this isn't just something people do in the movies. Any person has the right to say "no" or "stop" and it is perfectly fine to agree that when a certain word is said... EVERYTHING STOPS. Back off then then talk about it.

Be sane and sober. Know your limits as well as your partner's. Don't lose yourself in the moment and tread into waters that you are unfamiliar with. If something is off-limits, don't go there no matter how intense things may get. And keep the drugs and alcohol away from your play time. You need a clear head to think straight. Period. If it squashes your fantasy? Too bad, so sad. Don't go there.

Start simple. You don't need to rig a swing with ropes and chains for your blindfolded partner to hang from the first time

you decide to be daring. Get to know what you like and don't like before diving into anything new or outside your norm. Things like soft ties, fuzzy handcuffs, and candle wax aren't just silly props. They can be used as starters if it is okay with everyone. It's all about mutual agreement. Remember to respect your partner. If it's not for them? It's not for the both of you.

No matter how old or new your relationship is with your partner, remember common courtesy. Don't leave your partner alone if they are in a compromised position. Check on them. "Are you okay?" is something you should be asking frequently, especially if it is a new territory you are getting into. After your adventure, take some time together. Make sure everyone is okay (physically and mentally), discuss things you may want to try next time, things that weren't really exciting or not something you would definitely do again. Keep in mind, there is a psychological aspect involved in bondage so be polite, stick to the rules, protect, honor, and respect all requests. Bondage may be for you... and it may not. No matter what you decide, it's okay. Chalk it up to experience and move forward in the direction you want. Be open, but have fun and BE SAFE!

Jim Furlong (Cont.)

Continued from Page 25

force behind the Capital Region music scene, and it's changing in a way that might drift bands and players away from being tied to an area. I can sing in a room and every phone and laptop in the world can carry it in real time. How do we preserve place? How do we maintain solidarity through the technology?

JF: Again...I plead ignorance. Most local musicians under 40 probably have no clue of my history in the local punk underground scene. The business of running a shop, finding collections, working a mail order, dealing with all the bureaucracy

involved with keeping my business legal and in compliance in F%*#ING NYS, as well as enjoying non-music related things in my off time takes up a lot of time. I would say that to maintain a sense of "place" and solidarity in this community, more "s+how of strength" type shows locally, highlighting 4-5 bands that maybe have different styles at local clubs or renting out a space for performance. To draw fans and friends of bands to see other artists. Early shows, say starting 6-7PM

RRX: This is where you can answer the question I didn't ask. Anyone to whom you want to give undying gratitude? Any records

that do say something played in reverse? Educate, enlighten, emote – the floor is yours.

JF: I give my undying gratitude to anyone who ever taught me how to do or make something that was useful in my life. Numerous teachers, employers in

many different fields, and most of all, my wife for supporting my whims and ideas these last 35 years.

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Collar City Scribe (Cont.)

Continued from Page 27

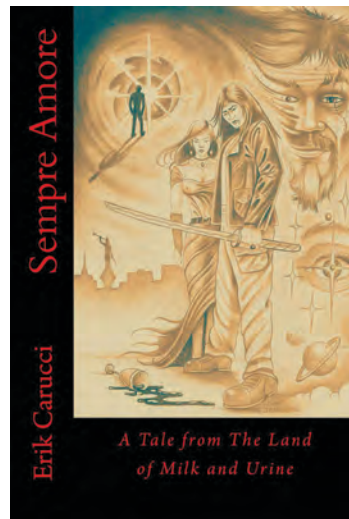
small gesture of appreciation. If it brings others to visit and explore her feisty heart, then I have done her some justice. Many of my characters are amalgams of friends and loved ones. Some were flattered upon recognizing something familiar. Others...well, let's just say feelings of awkwardness were obvious. I didn't let it sway me in either direction and caution never festered. I created something worthy and wanted to share it with the world. I rolled the dice and never looked back.

Besides the art and photography, the only help I enlisted was my roguish reader. I did all the proofreading and editing. It was a grueling and massive process. I recommend finding someone trustworthy to help and be more involved. That's how I plan to roll. I know it's not easy, but I hope my words inspire others to try their hand at writing. It's personally rewarding and necessary to enriching our culture. Our contributions to the world's zeitgeist must continue!

RRX: So, of course, the hustle

never ends if you want royalty checks, so what's on deck?

Erik: I work anywhere from 40 to 60 hours a week. It's not easy finding time to write and the feel needs to be there. My first novel took almost 3 yrs, and this one is on the same track. The next novel is "Forever Troy". It's a sequel to "Sempre Amore". It should be out sometime this winter. Keep an eye on my TroyCore Media facebook page for updates and a website launch over the next horizon!



Sempre Amore is available at Amazon.com



Buck Dharma

Photo provided.

Buck Dharma (Cont.)

Continued from Page 23

possibly spotted a trillion stars, which doesn't even take into account planets. It makes me wonder where we are in the scheme of things.

Buck: I'm just starting to grasp how vast the "is", is. I mean you can't call it the universe because there's a lot of universes. And you would assume there's more Earths with people on them or somebody on them, there has to be. We just haven't found it yet. But you know UFO's are in the news all the time. These pilots see stuff that do maneuvers that just don't make sense in a regular aircraft as we know it.

RRX: It boggles my mind.

Buck: I don't doubt they're up there. I hope they're not malevolent. There are probably whole plains of existence that are nothing like us. But we can't worry about it.

The current BOC line-up is as follows:

Eric Bloom (Lead Vocals, Stun Guitar, Keyboards/Synthesizers) Donald Roeser-Buck Dharma (Lead Guitar/Vocals.) Richie Castellano (Keyboards/Rhythm Guitar.) Danny Miranda (Bass/Backing Vocals.) Jules Radino (Drums/Percussion)

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Stephanie Levay (Cont.)

...Continued from Page 17

it so it made no sense. I interpreted the letter for him and told him what it was supposed to say and this childlike joy came over this guy's face. He looked at William and he's like 'this is amazing.' And William asked "do you like it?" And he said "I love it, this means so much to me." And what really meant a lot to me was when he walked away he didn't toss it aside or set it down somewhere, he folded it up so carefully and put it in his pocket, making sure it went in the pocket. Like he was going to keep it, like it did mean something.

RRX: It seems like the letter was meant for that guy.

Stephanie: My kids do a lot of stuff like that. Now he wants to send letters to everybody.

RRX: That's a great attitude, your kids are amazing. Good job!

Stephanie: I always feel real proud when they execute that kindness, thoughtfulness and empathy for others. They both have total confidence, so I'm really happy that they have that. I didn't have that when I was a kid. I went through years, a couple decades of not knowing really who I was and... Not so much not knowing who I was more like never being sure of who I was. I always knew who I was I just fought against what I knew wasn't right. I knew how I was being treated wasn't right but always told you're creating more of a problem complaining about how you're being mistreated than recognizing that I'm trying to fight against that. I was not encouraged in art, I was

told to put it on the back burner and that it was a waste of time and ridiculous. People don't make careers out of that, it was treated as a hobby.

How I was raised had the opposite effect so I became very anti-capitalist. I saw a push for, you're only as good as your productivity and I thought that was crazy because I had different needs, different abilities, learning disabilities and a lot of abuse that I went through as a child. That took so many years to recover from and I was not treated with any respect as somebody who needed to still deal with those things. I was expected to just push pass that and be at a level that I just wasn't at yet. And the expectations of me were just not realistic according to what

my actual abilities and skill levels were. I was more or less being told, no you go sit in the box, not the circle and I wanted to go run out to the trapezoid. (Laughter)

That took many years to get over too but I fought against it. I at least had validation when I did the research and discovered what my coping mechanisms were. I could spot what my triggers were to correct these behaviors within myself.

This article has been edited for space. The full article can be found on the Xperience Blog on www.radioradiox.com.

To check out more on Stephanie Levay visit www.zhibit.org/stephanielevay

■ Stephanie Levay painting "Forever in Bloom"

Photo provided.



The Slide Player - Xperience Fiction

By Liam Sweeny

Rolley's name was Otto, as printed on his birth certificate, but no one ever called him Otto, and few of his friends would've turned their heads if someone called him by his given. Really, the story was he collected names. He was, at various times, and in various levels of tanked, referred to as Duster, The Cranken, D.B. Cooper, Cherub, Lieutenant Hoagie and Sparkmaster. By that time in his career, Rolley just cracked a smile whenever anyone said a name and hoped it landed if it needed to.

Rolley's hands, however, had only one nickname; sliders. Rolley was Robert Oppenheimer when he found an object in the room he could use to play slide guitar. He'd find a salt shaker in a pizza joint and cradle it in between his index and middle finger, losing himself as he tested it out on a phantom guitar. He always carried an extra twenty bucks to buy bric-a-brac with slide potential, even at the expense of a lunch craving.

Jack's was hopping the night Rolley caught lightning. Jackson's Delicatessen was neither called Jackson's, by anyone, nor anything close to a delicatessen. Jack Butler wanted a juke joint like the one in Mississippi where he spent his best days. His wife Elba wanted a Deli like the one in New York City where she spent her



best days. Jack, being no stranger to compromise, kept a mini fridge full of packaged cold cuts. His wife, no stranger to spite, bought a titanium combination lock for the breaker box in the basement.

Rolley set up his amp just like every other gig. And in so many ways, it was unremarkable. Jack smoked a cigarette out in the parking lot, kicking a creosote-soaked log that lay on the ground, giving the cars a place to line up. The clouds looked a bit ominous, but Rolley figured it would break the humidity. Mark and Sarah were behind the dumpster smoking pot, which was pointless because Jack's was on the corner of a cornfield and the county's biggest junkyard.

The show went fine, as the dirt bike races went on that day, and the after-party oozed into the "deli," and their set. Folks came in rowdy and cheerful, and if there was ever a time where Rolley and his assembled misfits could hang their freak flag, it was there and then.

And then, well; it happened all at once, and there is no one in or out of Jack's Delicatessen that would say that Rolley wasn't occasioned upon by the truest of divine acts. It was a metal slide,

in fact a common slide that Rolley bought from a music magazine. It was a thunderstorm that had been predicted to come and go throughout the entire Capital Region. And lastly, it was the wiring that Jack had performed behind his wife's back, to circumvent her power control, and the fact that he paid for the work in bourbon that never had to leave the worksite.

The ambulance took twenty-five minutes to get there. Rolley wasn't complaining. Mark mentioned it to Sarah.

"I don't think he can complain. He's," Sarah's features scrunched,

"You think it's still in him?"

"I don't think so," he said. "I heard you can touch lightning people right after."

Jack walked over, hands wrapped around his sides.

"Look at his hair." He chuckled. "You remember those troll dolls?"

Sarah tried to hide a laugh, but it snuck out. They stood around Rolley's still form. Two guys that looked to be farm boys moonlighting as EMTs wheeled a black stretcher.

"Ya know, probably his best slide tonight."



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