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September 2020  
Vol. 2, Issue 9.

## SIDE SHOW GYPSY

Marcus Ruggeiro walks us through the strange and winding road of Americana.

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## SARAH PETRUCCI

Artist and designer Sarah Petrucci lights up the imagination and fires up the soul.

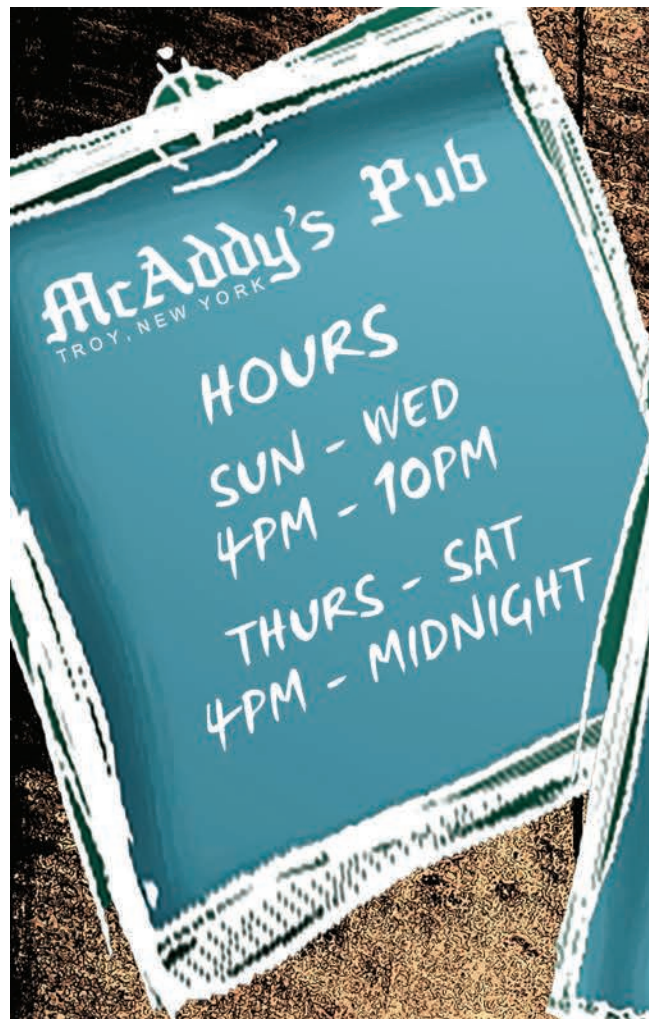
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# Meg De'Lish: Art for the Living

*The pinup model is a gateway to the fantastic, and model Meg De'Lish opens the door to new travelers.*



BY LIAM SWEENEY

Meg De'Lish. Photo provided.

The pinup; the idea, the concept – is worldwide and expressed in many forms in all types of media, but it feels uniquely American. Many of us think of some of the best times in our recent history when they see a pinup. It is a celebration of form, infused in color, nestled in carefully constructed scenes.

Meg De'Lish is a photographer, pinup model, and an inspiration to many women who feel they could never be pinups. Meg believes that beauty is always present, trapped only in the limitations of the mind.

We sit with Meg and look at the

world from behind the backdrop.

**RRX:** In my mind, when I think of pinups, I think of the ones painted on to bomber pilots in World War Two. Maybe it was good luck, or something easy on the eyes. What does the pinup have to offer in tough times, like war? And what do they offer any time?

**MD:** Pinup historically in wartime has been a reminder of home, something normal in the chaos. A reminder of beauty, especially in an ugly time like war. Pinup has always been about beauty, and that is a constant. Today some of the groups that I belong to like The Rockabetties and Vintage for

Veterans are about supporting veterans. We attend events and take pictures with cars and people for donations to raise money for veteran causes. We also attend events where veterans will be in attendance, like honor flights. I get the privilege of thanking the veterans for their service and hear the stories from their military service and life experiences. They appreciate the sense of nostalgia we bring in our vintage style and personas. Another thing that pinup offers is support. We support all women, and encourage them to find

*Continued on Page 5...*



## SIDE SHOW GYPSY

Marcus Ruggero has pieces of America in his back pocket, and he's showing them off.

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## SARAH PETRUCCI

Making life more pleasant and interesting is Sarah Petrucci's passion and trade.

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Published by Imperial Broadcasting  
in conjunction with RadioradioX.  
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Photo provided by MKC Photography.



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their own beauty and strength. We support each other and all women, and as the world get more complicated, we can all use more support systems.

**RRX:** We like to see behind the curtain of the creative Oz Pinup, on the other side of the camera and lighting, must be a lot of work. What goes into a typical shoot? And not just the make-up; the whole set design, the photographer, any daily rituals, etc.?

**MD:** There is so much that goes into a photo shoot, makeup is one thing, but it starts with a beauty routine that you do every day, not just on photo shoot days. The flawless look that is achieved is the result of a lot of work on both ends of the camera. It starts when a theme for a photo shoot is decided. On my end, I start sometimes months in advance planning costume, purchasing and sometimes fixing vintage items. Finding the appropriate accessories, sometimes making them or recreating something. Ordering vintage items and fabric not forgetting to plan for shipping time. A set has to be dreamed up and created, set pieces, props, and the backdrop. Lighting has to be planned and adjusted in just the right ways. The photographer has to think about and plan for, not just the camera angle, but the lens, and how it will interact with the set that is being created, the lights, backdrop, and of course the model. Test shots are done, lights are adjusted, props moved, backdrops tweaked. Then you get to the actual shoot. Doing hair and makeup can take many hours. The photographer is doing any last minute preparations. Sometimes we use effects, one example from a recent photo shoot they were getting dry ice set up to create fog. Then the model comes in and you have to adjust camera and lights for things like height and colors of dresses or hair. Then the two people have to work together and communicate to figure poses and shadows, so there are a lot of

moving pieces. So, all the pulleys and gears at work might be surprising, not nearly as glamorous as you might think...and maybe a little boring.

**RRX:** Many women don't feel like pinups, but you make everybody feel that way. You have shown a spectacular talent for accentuating a curve and focusing on that to bring out someone's beauty. What does being a pinup say about body positivity? And what do you do to promote that positivity in others?

**MD:** Pinup and body positivity go hand in hand. That's what pinups and pinup groups are about. There is beauty in all women, all shapes, sizes, ages, races, ethnicities, gender identities. We know what it can be like to struggle with self-image. We also know what it means to have support and how powerful that can be to a woman's confidence. Once you have that support, gaining confidence in who you are and what makes you beautiful becomes easier. I take it as my personal mission, not only with my photography, but personally. When I am out making public appearances, or just chatting with people every day, I actively work to support women and remind them of how beautiful they are. Dressing "Pinup" or vintage tends to attract attention, both positive and negative. When I talk to women, they will often tell me how they wish they could dress this way. I talk about the personal struggles I've had, I talk about how I started doing pinup and posing for pictures when I was plus sized and that they can do it. There is a community of women who are ready, willing, able, and here to help you and support you, and that I am there to support them and all women as they find their confidence and let their beauty shine! It's where my tag line comes from... "I'm De'Lish... And so are you!" I truly believe that all women are beautiful and "De'Lish" they only have to let it out.

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"Gus" of Blackcat Elliot. Photo by Amy Modesti.

# Terrific Times and Temporary Terrain

*Music festivals are what you make of them, and "Turfball" was made of some pretty damn cool stuff.*

**BY AMY MODESTI**

**L**ive music has been difficult to locate this summer. Concert spectators are driving to Rensselaer County to enjoy entertainment at town community centers.

Drive-in movie theaters have become the new norm to watch a movie and a show. Musicians and bands live stream their concerts on social media. Private parties are held at musician's homes.

Musicians are finding ways to connect with friends, family, and fans through the power of music. Music is the heart and soul of what keeps things alive in all who are bound to its beats, rhythms, and lyricism. One method how music was brought back into my circle was at a friend's private party I was graciously invited to in July: "Turfball 2020".

Many of you are thinking, what is Turfball 2020? Is it a party held for baseball players after their winning game? Is it held at a golf course? Who even came up with the idea of "Turfball 2020"?!

Greg Aidala of Radical Gage Entertainment came up with this ingenious idea. "The event is something I always wanted to do on my property for years, but because of my schedule it was always difficult to plan. Then along comes

COVID-19. So, back in April I thought, 'Hey, this might be a good time to host such a private event in 'responsible fashion'. Turfball comes in part from the name of my street (Turf Lane) and I added the ball because I am a fan of Phish and their festivals (as of late) end with the word ball.

So, to make this happen, I made it a neighborhood event mixed with family and friends. I could not think of a better time than mid-summer to hold the event to get people out of the house, enjoy the company of friends and listen to live music. In addition to the music, there was food, lawn games and even a fire pit after the music. My motto for the day was: Music. Laughs. Good People. A dream come true for this upstate New York boy."

Turfball arrived on Saturday, July 11 and brought out an evening full of great music and total relaxation with good company. The entertainment featured Aidala's side project, The G10 Project. Aidala formed it with his best friend from childhood, Todd Smith (guitar/vocals), and his cousin, Mark Klein (drums/vocals), who is the drummer in Blackcat Elliot. Headlining Turfball was Blackcat Elliot. Klein's group features "Fast Eddie" Lyons (bass/vocals), and Kostas "Gus" Hais (guitar/vocals).

The G10 Project were rocking, as were Blackcat Elliot. The G10 Project brought the 1990's back to full throttle with their covers of "No Rain" (Blind Melon), "Wicked

Games" (Chris Issac), and "Last Dance with Mary Jane" (Tom Petty). Watching Aidala and Klein jive on riffs and head bang to a Phish tune or Nirvana was intriguing. It was nice to watch them let loose and enjoy their moment on stage, even if the stage was an outdoor back porch.

Blackcat Elliot was loud and proud and they let their friends and fans know that rock and roll is still alive and kicking through their songs from their album, "There is No Good in Us" and covers. Their rendition of "Blitzkrieg Bop" (The Ramones) was rocking and had their fans chanting the intro in unison. All originals were played in fine form. It gave their new fans a listen of their new tunes, "Sucker in the Front Seat", "Let Yourself Go", "Turn It", and "Come Take Me Away". Hais, full of energy and drive, knelt down and wailed out his guitar solo along the porch boards as he, Lyons, and Klein, closed out their set with "Never Come Clean".

An encore followed. Aidala played "Folsom Prison Blues" (Johnny Cash) and closed his party out with a jam session of "Seven Nation Army" (The White Stripes) with Klein, Lyons, and Smith. Turfball was a blast!! It was nice to sit back and relax with my musician friends who I have not seen in quite some time.

Despite the fun that was had that night, COVID 19 affected both the creativity and life of Aidala and Blackcat Elliot. Despite having gigs cancelled or postponed, Aidala remains positive and



resorted to writing (fiction/non-fiction) and playing music every single day. Gus too, has remained in creative mode.

“Covid and creativity. Interesting choice of words. Being locked up for these weeks has forced me to be more creative and of course, write more songs. It has forced me to be better at it as well. It has been non-stop writing and recording demos for the next album from home. Once the demos are decent enough, I send them to Marky and Eddie to dissect. In the end, it is gratifying to hear the final take of our songs. Especially when it is done live. It seems that my creativity has flourished during lockdown. Worst part about it, we cannot perform. I think it will get better though. When it does, we will have an extensive list of new songs.”

Aidala added, “The only way to push through the tough times in life is to keep moving forward knowing (and praying). It will get better in time. I am really looking forward to performing in front of large crowds of good people

again. And, I cannot wait to go see my favorite comedians and musical groups live again...and hopefully soon. Viva la creatives!”

Aidala and BCE have been working on some new projects before and during COVID-19. Aidala landed a role on a new show on MTV called, Revenge Prank. His episode was filmed in Long Island for three days at the end of February, and he plays a plastic surgeon. The episode is due to air in August 2020. His experience being on the show was fun and that the people at MTV were super cool to him.

“I’m also continuing to work on two shows that I produce and act in: Welcome Home which airs on Amazon Prime and also, QuarantTeam - a show me and friends of mine developed during the early COVID months to which we received national attention. We recruited a group of professional actors we know throughout the country and did everything through Zoom. We did our best to stay

positive and funny through difficult times. It was a new way of producing, directing, and acting. We all learned many lessons and had a great time doing so.”

Fast Eddie of BCE included, “What new projects and new work is Blackcat Elliot working on? I took some time off from playing/practicing for a couple of months during quarantine, but fortunately, Gus has been busy writing songs. I have been working with Gus and Marky over the last month or so, and it is good to be back. Playing at Turfball really helped to get me back on track. Since playing out is indefinitely on hold, we are going to keep moving ahead by working on and developing the new material. We are hoping to get back to the recording studio sometime this fall.”

Aidala and BCE had a blast being involved in Turfball. For Aidala, he wanted his guests to feel safe, happy, and ‘alive’. He loved how everyone got to share in a SPAC-like experience and enjoy his property. The feedback Aidala received was

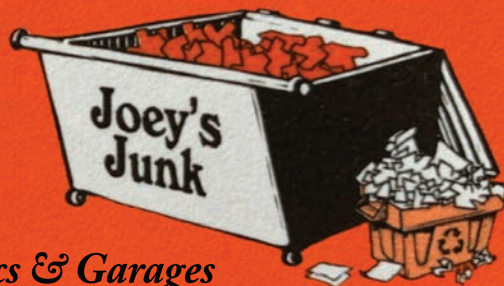
overwhelmingly positive and he received two weeks’ worth of notes of gratitude after the event. It was the most fun he had in many, many months.

“I couldn’t think of better people (family and friends) to be in the company of and, to share the stage with Blackcat Elliot was a treat indeed. My reflections on the day? Peace, love, music, and a beautiful summer day. What else could one ask for? We’ll have to do it again in some capacity in the near future for sure.”



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# The Monster Machination



Mike and the Monsters. Photo by Stephanie Bartik.

*In the latest issue of Lensmanship, Michael Flynn of Mike and the Monsters takes us through rock and roll and her own personal kick.*

**BY STEPHANIE BARTIK**

**D**efinitely a “Rocker Chick”, Definitely a talent, Definitely a force to be reckoned with! And beware- she might be on stage one minute and standing on the bar the next! When you go to see her perform with Mike and the Monsters, be ready for one heck of a show!

RRX interviewing Michael (Mike) Flynn of Mike and the Monsters A female-fronted five piece rock powerhouse Mike and the Monsters cover a wide range and variety of music, incorporating high-energy true Rock & Roll The band is very interactive, so you will be a part of the show!

**RRX:** Do you see yourself as an artist or Entertainer?

**MF:** Great question! That’s easy .Most an entertainer! Coming from a

time when singing came straight from the heart, and most weren’t concerned if you could, or couldn’t do acrobatic singing, like runs, etc., we were all about how big the show was and who had the biggest hair, wildest clothing and stadium stages were buried with guitar cabinets. as far as vocalists were concerned, I was personally inspired by artists the likes of David Lee Roth, Joan Jett, Ozzy, Vince Neil, James Hetfield, Blackie Lawless, Lita Ford, and the list goes on! You get the idea. I’m sure most would say these artists were in a league of their own, and wouldn’t be considered “Great” vocalists? More so, entertainers. But, it all boils down to personal taste.

**RRX:** Are you over the hill, or the best is yet to come?

**MF:** Ha! like a fine wine! Only better with age. I guess to begin answering

this question I’ll have to scroll back and look at the past 35 years I’ve been performing in live bands .My first years aspiring to be like “that” guy/girl on MTV, there was a lot of forced effort that turned into trying way to hard. With time, comes wisdom. I’ve learned over the years to just be me, and not worry about what others think. Accept criticism with grace, and treasure all the great moments .Every performance for me is an opportunity to improve ,or change something I’m doing, and make it better. I can honestly say I’m harder on myself than anyone could ever be. With that being said, I’m always looking to the next show, or practice to be “even better” than the last. The best is yet to come!

**RRX:** Do you consider rock as a music style as alive and vibrant as ever?

**MF:** YES! It’s true. Rock has made a huge comeback over the past 7-10 years. I attribute this to my generation’s children. Many of these kids have grown up



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listening to what we liked (as most do). The 70s, 80s, early 90s have gone full circle, and the young adults are now growing their hair longer. Forming bands that write in 4/4 tempo reminiscent of the hair band days. Much of the new music comes from the UK. Just do a search on YouTube, you'll quickly find this is the new trend. Unfortunately, it takes a while to see it happen here in the US. It is happening. This new young adult generation has grown, and the parents are looking to get back out after years of being Mom & Dad. Now, having a newfound freedom once again, they're lookin to relive those days when they were young adults themselves. (We're not that old yet!) Being in a Rock/covers band I see this all the time.

**RRX:** How do you decide what to wear on stage?

**MF:** I make that decision typically an hour or two before leaving for the show. Pending the venue, and how I'm feeling. Sometimes I just want to tear it

up in sneakers & jeans. Other times I'm feeling "Rockstar mode" and out comes the blingy heeled boots & red pants!

**RRX:** Is there, just like for sportspeople, an age bracket when rock stars are in their prime?

**MF:** No. All depends on the person. How hard did you ride and put yourself away wet?! LOL! How many drugs did you do? how many cigarettes did you smoke? how much alcohol did you consume? Really, I believe if we do everything, good or bad in moderation, a certain amount of youth will be preserved. And more so than that. I believe it's a state of mind. Really impossible to put a number on it.

**RRX:** Tell me about a time when you had to handle an unruly audience member.

**MF:** I've been known to speak out on the rare occasion this happens. usually a little public embarrassment ceases this behavior. If not, then usually

the big boys in the room handle it! Poor sap!

**RRX:** Walk me through a typical set up, warmup & breakdown procedures for gigs

**MF:** After almost a decade with this band, we are a well-oiled machine. Everyone has a job. I drive the PA to the venue. The guys unload gear. Approx. a 45-minute setup. quick sound checks if we have time due to my very often tardiness. whoops. Our engineer runs the sound, so we don't have too much to deal with during the show. Typically, I eat, talk to our friends/fans while the guys tear down & load gear. Usually our bassist pulls me into the truck, and he drives my drunk ass home! Diva band life! But seriously, I handle all the bookings & arrangements including securing a sound engineer for all shows.

This gives me a pass on the load in & out. I do help sometimes!

**RRX:** Where do you see yourself

next year, 3 years, 5 years & beyond?

**MF:** Next year? 3-5 years? Most likely right where I am. For how long? IDK? But, one thing for sure. I'll probably always perform. Even if it turns into some old age home acoustic gig.

Thanks for the questions! I hope my answers gave a different perspective from a woman's point of view. I hope you & the readers enjoy the ride! I sure as hell have, and still do! Thank you! Rock is ageless! Just ask any Elvis fan.



# New Sounds from The Northway

*Mix punk rock with progressive rock, throw in a little math rock to taste, and you have a fresh new sound in the Capital Region.*



L-R: Zach Linart, John Lombardi, Nick Masucci. Photo provided.

**T**he Northway are an up-and-coming punk/progressive rock band with an infectious energy and catchy songwriting skills. The band has been working on a second LP and wrote in to discuss their progress and other aspects of band life.

**RRX:** How are you guys doing as a band? I saw you play last at a local battle of the bands. What are your thoughts about shows mostly being canned? How are you coping with this?

**ZL:** I feel we're doing as well as can. We are working toward getting the record out and working out the logistics of everything. Not having shows has allowed me at least to reflect on taking our lifestyles for granted sometimes, and thinking about what it really takes to make those aspects of the industry thrive.

**NM:** Covid has been hard on everyone, and we're doing the best we can. I really miss playing out and practicing with the guys.

**RRX:** I've been following you guys and see that you've been working on a second LP with plans to release it semi-soon (correct me if wrong). What do you guys want to say about your up-

coming release?

**ZL:** It's coming soon, and it's our best album so far I'd say. It's a bit out there, but it flows well I think.

**JL:** I'm just glad to finally be able to share this with people. We've spent a lot of time on it, since last June I think? Everybody's had a lot going on and it's kind of dragged things out a little bit,

but it worked out in the end and things really came together nicely.

**NM:** LP2 is coming soon, for real. We've been saying that for 13 months but this time it's personal...or serious...or whatever. It's coming.

**RRX:** Your Instagram presence is highly entertaining in my humble opinion. What can you tell us about the challenges of maintaining a social media page for a music project?

**ZL:** I don't like doing social media stuff too much, because it seems as though there's no right way to really do it. Sure there are things you can do to help, but it seems as though a lot of it is luck. It's cool to be able to connect with people who enjoy our stuff though, and I think as long as you're responsible with your platform you're on the right track.

**JL:** Trying to play the algorithm at the core of all social media promotion,

and I've been working on improving that recently, but I do think people really dig the memes. It also gives me and Nick an excuse to be complete buffoons.

**NM:** Keeping up with social media and staying in the good graces of the algorithm is a constant struggle. We just post memes and hope we don't get Zuckerberg'ed.

**RRX:** Listening to your music I hear an interesting blend of what seems like punk/pop-punk mixed with math-rock elements. I particularly enjoy the way the drums are mixed and how bombastic your tracks are, would you say these interpretations are accurate? What are some of your favorite inspirations?

**ZL:** For the new album we kinda dropped some of the math-rock stuff, and put more of an emphasis on production and songwriting. I'm not even sure it was a conscious choice. Some of my inspirations are some of the newer progressive metal stuff, and some emo music as well.

**JL:** I'd say that's a fairly accurate assessment. We definitely push our boundaries farther on the new project, there's a lot of different sounds and sonic aesthetics. As far as inspirations, I think the obvious ones are Blink-182 and any of Jeff Rosenstock's music pretty much. From my end I've definitely probably brought in some influence from like Neck Deep or Radiohead, but honestly I'm pretty scatterbrained when it comes to music so I tend to pull small parts from a lot of different places.

**NM:** We definitely have some out there sounds, from jazz to metal. For me, at least, I always describe our music as progressive rock with a sturdy foundation of punk music. We all have a lot of very different influences, and I think that it shows. We take pride in genre bending while trying to make it feel natural and flow smoothly.

**RRX:** You guys had fantastic energy at the Battle of the Bands I saw (not to seem like an ass-kisser, but I felt that you guys should have won that). How important is having a fun stage presence to you guys?

**ZL:** I guess the important thing for me is to just be myself on stage. I'm not really into being this larger than life 'rock star' type. I value being able to show people that anyone can do what I do. I feel the less folks on pedestals is crucial to cultivating better spaces both online, and on stage.

**JL:** I appreciate that you enjoyed the energy of the performance. I'm usually just trying to put out some sort of energy and go with it because a lot of the songs are pretty difficult and I need to put a lot of focus on them; it's kind of the way my brain works.

**RRX:** One of your lyrics on "Skateboard Petalboard" references Guitar Hero 3. How many of you can actually pass "Through the Fire and the Flames" on expert I 'm not sure if that song was on that particular game as I was a Rock-Band kid, but it's still a rite of passage)? Just curious.

**ZL:** I tried to FC (full combo) it, but I couldn't quite do it. I suppose that's why I'm not really a shredder.

**JL:** "Through the Fire and the Flames" WAS in fact on GH3. I'm pretty sure I may have made it through an expert like once but it's possible I never did it at all. I got pretty good at GH but that song is something else. My friend Noah from high school can play it and he uses the controller like a keyboard in his lap. It's kind of crazy.

**RRX:** Describe your songwriting process. How do you usually decide what to use and what to scrap?

**ZL:** Sometimes it's lyrics first, sometimes it's the music. Sometimes it all comes together quite quickly. Usually the stuff scrapped would be songs that weren't complete, songs that

*Continued on Page 31..*



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# Circus Roadway Side Show Gypsy

*Marcus Ruggiero is bringing the strange and the mighty to a cornfield near you!*

**BY LIAM SWEENEY**

Gypsy. Did it originate from something you were doing, so as to wrap around a project of yours and grow, or was it a project that you joined up with. And regardless of which, can you take us through those initial steps of getting your lineup to the point at which you tapped the mic on the stage at that first gig?

**MR:** SSGB, unbeknownst to me, manifested itself. What I mean is when I wrote the songs such as “Long Ways Down”, “Quiero Tus Besos” “The Clown and the Snake Lady” and “Life’s Crazy Road” between 2009 and 2015 to name a few, at that point I had no idea what I was going to do with these songs. I placed them in my archives waiting for a home; waiting to be brought to life.

When I wrote the songs I didn’t know what their purpose was or how to present them. They were rogues, every now and again I would write another and I also placed them in my archives, these songs came out of nowhere. Basically they were like gypsies just showing up out of nowhere with no home and no destination, lol.

Also I might add that in the time since I wrote those songs I was writing others and was recording and releasing

Marcus Ruggiero. Photo provided.

America is a treasure chest to the ear. Along the highways and byways beats are carried over vibrating strings and crooners sing for that girl they knew one summer at the county fair. Americana is more than just a music; it’s music. It’s the telling of a story in a language everyone can get.

Marcus Ruggiero and Sideshow Gypsies bring notes and grooves from the land of plenty to share with everyone that finds them, because you search for Americana until you become Americana.

I sit with Marcus and we talk the glory days.

**RRX:** Sideshow Gypsy is Americana, which is really a universe in and of itself. I’ve interviewed people that play and write Americana, and I’m always curious to understand what makes it their genre. Could anything developed in America be considered Americana? Or does it take a special something?

**MR:** Americana? Well, it does have a distinctive sound yes and actually Wikipedia can explain it in more detail if anyone’s interested in what it is. I don’t think just anything written in America makes it Americana. Although it is kind of a mixed cocktail, rock, country, rhythm and blues and I think sometimes a bit of pop sneaks in there to give it its sound...

And then there’s jazz..lol.

**RRX:** On the origin of Sideshow

several EPs and LPs. And what finally became SDGB songs were just never included.

But Then I wrote “Little Tornado” and all of a sudden I thought wait? I have some others like this? And I went through my archives to locate the previous “gypsy” songs and it all made sense to me that collection of songs had a destination, a home.

Following that I wrote “Sweet” “There’s a Girl I Know”, “Drunken Sea” and all the others on the SSGB self-titled LP became the record. And lastly but not least I wrote “Side Show Gypsy” and “Song for Wendy” and it all made sense.

**RRX:** Listening to what I have of your work, it’s very earthy, very gravelly, like thumbs along the highway. When you’re writing a song, do you have any visual references? Memories that your writing about, obviously, but more so a “happy place,” a place you go in your head that just pumps you up. If

you have a place, what does it look like?

**MR:** A traveling circus, on a winding dirt road complete with fire eaters, horse whisperers, magicians, and contortionists and I feel like I’m the ring-leader, having only one goal in mind to entertain, to bring people along on magical journey .

“Unless a man enters upon the vocation intended for him by nature, and best suited to his peculiar genius, he cannot succeed.” (P.T Barnum)

**RRX:** You recorded Sideshow Gypsy live after around eight shows. And I think this is a big choice with bands: to record track by track, or to record live. It seems like there would be pros and cons to each method. Do you think that some kinds of music most benefit from a live recording? Do you think that Sideshow Gypsy naturally did?

**MR:** Although there are variables, I think the writer/producer has to have some sort of a vision and reason why to do so. For me recording live gives the songs more life and more emotion, rather than tracking. Also, my vision was I wanted the album to sound like what the band sounds like live in concert. On a side note however we did over dub the violin and backing vocals.

**RRX:** Times are tough. Without going into innumerable detail, fates are decided in this kind of crucible, and bands, musicians – even more so. A strong sound is so critical now, because people are going to be exposed to you through their sound system instead of

the stage. How do local musicians get their sound in local hands right now?

**MR:** Creatively. Lol. Also I have always been a believer in that if the music is worthy people will find you. So we will see.

**RRX:** Back on Americana. Or roots music. Roots rock. I feel it powerfully when I hear it. But I’m a forty-four year-old. Americana really calls to a time before me as well as, well, during me. But generations change. Would you be willing to wager a guess at what kind of sounds might make up Americana 50 years from now?

**MR:** Well it’ll be fun to take a crack at it. Although as we all know things change and music is always growing and changing in its subtle sometimes explosive and romantic fashion.

I’m looking forward to whatever that sound will be tomorrow rather than in 50 years lol. Although if I may? I recommend you check out a listen to “gangstagrass”, my latest favorite band, Americana is already changing its face my friend no need to wait.

**RRX:** This is where you answer the question I didn’t ask. Where are the best flea markets? What kitch can be fashioned into instruments? Educate, enlighten, emote – the floor is yours.

**MR:** Open floor? Well I’m always thinking of my daughters, Jesus, Time and Gratitude. Do for others and be thankful, gratitude is one ingredient to the fountain of youth. Matter of fact, “In this life we fight for what we need, in this life if we end up with just a little of what we want we shall find each other down on our knees in thanks, a whole bunch of Lord thank you’s” (Lyric excerpt: Song of Gratitude/ Marcus Ruggiero Music)

I wish to thank the incredible SSGB, I call my family. Sonny Speed, Brian Melick, James Cappello and Doug Moody, also our sensational backing vocalist Areli Mendoza-Pannone.

Peace and God Bless



“Side Show Gypsy” started as a collection of songs with no home.





# The Keys to Life Art, Design Magic

*Artist and designer Sarah Petrucci takes us through aesthetics and imagination.*

**BY LIAM SWEENEY**

**R**eality can be bleached by the news tickers and the 9-to-5s and the endless pile of pills that cry out to be juggled. And then you see it: that flash of color. The shapes, stroke and gloriously blended gradients that soak into that bleached timeline to remind us that there's more to live than the ticking hands of a clock.

Sarah Petrucci is an artist and graphic designer from right here in our own little kingdom. Her work is, in this writer's opinion, transcendent and inviting to that transcendentalism. She works in multiple media, and she's here to brighten your doorstep.

I sit with Sarah and we talk about practical sorcery.

**RRX:** I love covering art and music because of the similarities in the craft of each, and how they have so correlated an effect on the person taking them in. So let me ask a big question. A lot of artists and musicians have "that vision" or "that sound" that they chase but never quite catch, and they create along the way. What is your big vision?

**SP:** I have been creating for as long as I can remember and had the compulsion before I knew what it was.

Maybe it's a bit cliché, but I remember the first time I saw Van Gogh's "Starry Night" and Edvard Munch's "The Scream." I was in the 4th grade and couldn't get over it...I wanted to memorize every brush stroke. It was the first time I "felt" art and realized that it wasn't just about looking and seeing. That same year I attempted to execute that concept with a rather fearsome papier-mâché mask that my art teacher took a special interest in. She entered it

in a statewide juried exhibition called the Imagination Celebration in 1992. I called the piece "Long Nose, Wooden Tooth." My parents and I attended the reception at the NYS Museum and I vividly remember the stark white walls exploding with art. I knew in that moment that I was an artist and that's what I wanted to do forever.

I kept my creativity close and used it as a coping skill during my tumultuous teenage years, graduating from

high school early to attend art school at the Sage Junior College of Albany. I wanted to find the "real artists," and back then it felt as elusive as finding a unicorn. I studied with Willie Marlowe, Garry Shankman and John Hampshire all of which influenced me exponentially; Marlowe in particular. I had never met a woman painter. Her work was all about color, intense close valued color, neon color, deep color-textural color all the time;



Sarah Petrucci. Photo provided.

sometimes straight from the tube. She encouraged every wacky notion I came up with and even allowed me to implement my own “independent study.” I created glow in the dark paintings, paintings on wood, metal and glass, and a series of paintings on car doors I ripped off of a 1978 Volvo, called “Vehicle of the Mind.” She challenged the notion of what “fine art” or high art was made of and I was obsessed. I’ve been chasing that vision ever since. In the words of Andy Warhol, I believe “Art is what you can get away with.”

**RRX:** Some say it’s all about the tools. Most in the know would argue that the tools in uninspired hands don’t amount to much. But in inspired, trained hands, the tools take on their

own life. You work in visual, so what do you like, in terms of different media, and different brushes, pens, charcoal, etc.?

**SP:** There are many tools in my toolbox and my approach is playful! As a graphic designer, my biggest tool is the Adobe Creative Suite, Photoshop and Illustrator mostly. In terms of painting or drawing, few things are off limits. Some of my favorite mediums include Liquitex acrylic and spray paint, ink, and Sharpies. I’m obsessed with Sharpies...the precision and permanence, and the colors they are coming out with are awesome. There are always at least a dozen of them in my purse.

**RRX:** Art and music both have two

natures, or aspects. Both can exist live, or “in the wild,” and they can be preserved in some way. In both, there’s live and recording. What do you think is different about a live, physical sketch or painting and the digitized version? Is it even better to present a work as digital only?

**SP:** The distinction between a physical sketch and the digitized version is similar to live music versus the recorded version in that digital work is usually much more refined. Mistakes can be corrected and polished. For me, the beginning is always the same; everything starts in my sketchbook. Whether that sketch evolves into something digital or not is another story. I don’t think it is better to present work

as digital only. With my design clients I always share my preliminary sketches; they are a part of the process. In the same way live music is raw, honest and full of soul, so too is “art in the wild.” I can’t imagine Pollock creating his splatter paintings digitally. I believe there is tremendous value in the process of creating art, and that process possesses equal importance to the final product.

**RRX:** You are a graphic designer. I wish I was. I know from work I do in this publication that graphic design is sometimes a delicious torture. How did you get into graphic design? And for someone like me, who probably wouldn’t score a scholarship anywhere, how can I get to a working understanding of graphic design?

**SP:** Delicious torture indeed. I never imagined I would get into graphic design! When I was a fine art student there was a rivalry with the design majors...a real us versus them attitude. The fine art folks were accused of being lazy and messy, while the design people were mocked as “sellouts” for being commercial and considered up-tight, compulsive and deadline oriented. I wanted no part of that! I was a perpetual student and was working as a police dispatcher for the city of Rensselaer. That job was not for me to say the least! It took a decade of repeatedly dropping out of school, trying again and again, until I found an online graphic design program at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. I was desperate to finish...something. I couldn’t see myself making a living with art alone, had little interest in teaching and couldn’t swallow being condemned to a life of emergency services, so I decided I would try. I enrolled in 2013 and FINALLY earned my bachelor’s degree in graphic design in 2018 while working full time. My goal was to happily compromise...not all graphic designers are



*Continued on Page 20..*

*Continued from Page 19.*

“artists” and not all artists are graphic designers but the aspiration was to incorporate and overlap the two into the creative career of my dreams.

My advice on gaining a working understanding of graphic design would be not to bury yourself in student loan debt like I did! My degree program was very challenging and had an 11% graduation rate. It involved a lot of independent learning. I knew I wouldn't have the discipline to teach myself without the pressure of getting a grade. If you have the patience and tenacity, you can definitely teach yourself! YouTube has changed everything. Many resources and tutorials are available through Adobe and Lynda.com as well.

**RRX:** Following up on the last question, graphic design. This world is governed by design. Advertising, architecture, the placement of junk food in end-caps at the supermarket – it's all

design. As an artist, do you ever feel you need to break a design/function barrier in your work, or is it better in the long-run to follow the rules, but maybe bend them?

**SP:** I'm a firm believer in learning the rules before bending them and that is where art and design differ. Art can be just for art's sake. Art can be a banana duct taped to a wall.

Design has function and rules are important because the human brain is wired to see structure, logic and patterns. Both are attempts to understand and describe the world around us. The subjects and methods may have different traditions, the intended audiences can be different, but I think the motivations are fundamentally the same. I don't like to regard design vs function as a barrier but as an opportunity to embrace both and solve the problem as eloquently as possible.




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# The Last of the Streetlight Beats

*Singer and songwriter Matt Pless is handling the times and building up inspiration for a spending spree.*

**BY ROB SMITTIX**

**S**o if you haven't familiarized yourself with Matt Pless yet, you can thank me later. We the music lovers are always looking to find new music and musicians to add to our personal playlists. I say look no further, Matt has been described as today's Bob Dylan but I find Matt's lyrics to be a step beyond. So thank you Matt Pless for speaking with me today I really appreciate your time.

**RRX:** Matt, what's good man? So you've been a favorite singer/songwriter of mine for years but for those just catching on: if you can give us a little introduction of who Matt Pless is and what you're all about it would be beneficial for our audience and prospective fans.

**MP:** Who is Matt Pless? Depends on what day of the week really. Who is anyone? Who are you while you are being who you are? I've been all kinds of people. I guess you could say I'm a little bit of everyone, just like everyone else.

In the context of this interview, which I assume is being conducted due to you having an awareness of my music, I would say Matt Pless is an artist, the last of the streetlight beat poets, the lost boy in the land of chalk drawings, and the minstrel troubadour trapped in the wrong time. Matt Pless

is about expression, freedom, truth seeking and invoking the spirit of a wild whimsical libertine.

**RRX:** We've all heard the cliché saying that actions speak louder than words but I'm a firm believer that sometimes words can be actions. With that being said, your lyrics are actions to me. As a songwriter myself sometimes all I feel I can do is write and if people heard the message then my actions helped. With the state of world affairs and our country, I can only imagine the inspiration you have had to write.

**MP:** Lately, I haven't written much at all about the state of the world. I've been writing about all of this for the last ten years. I suppose if there is more to write about the current state of the world, I assume you're referring to politics and the social landscape and all that, I will receive inspiration to write about it, but if you wanna know my perspective on today, I suggest looking in to things I wrote yesterday, maybe that will help you figure out tomorrow.

**RRX:** I've told you this in the past when we've spoken and I stand my ground that "When the Frayed Wind Blows" is one of the greatest songs ever written. I remember some of the



Matt Pless. Photo by Taylor Drew.

background story on this but can you tell the audience a little more about how this song came together?

**MP:** When the "Frayed Wind Blows", oh man, well, I was living in New York City juggling train wrecks and listening to painted piano players. There was this guy on the subway who winked at me, I found myself in a rather high strung state and couldn't sleep, something grabbed my hand and I started writing. Before I knew it, I had scribbled down dozens of lines on

about fourteen pieces of paper. I couldn't stop writing the damn thing, it just wouldn't finish itself. I had a feeling it was gonna shape up to be something important, so I stayed up for three days and didn't eat anything until it was finished. The whole thing was done by day three, except for the last line of the hook. I wandered around focusing on what would fit in that section for hours and hours, every combination of words I could think of. Finally, I came up with "when the fury of the

frayed wind blows” it felt perfect, like the moment you know you’re in love. It’s got something to do with Dante’s Inferno, A Peoples History of the United States (Howard Zinn), and Peter, Paul, and Mary.

**RRX:** “What a time to be alive,” obviously quoting one of your songs, but man, 2020 has been like a game of Jumanji. Roll the dice and take cover. What have you been doing to get through this? How are you holding up and what do you make of all of this uncertainty?

**MP:** What do I make of 2020? The real question is, what does 2020 make of me? Hopefully not a corpse. I’m holding up OK, as well as anyone who isn’t wearing a ventilator I suppose. I’m aware, cautious, but not paranoid or living in fear. I think having a balance with all that is important. I haven’t been doing much differently except being bored more often and wishing I could be out on tour playing shows. As

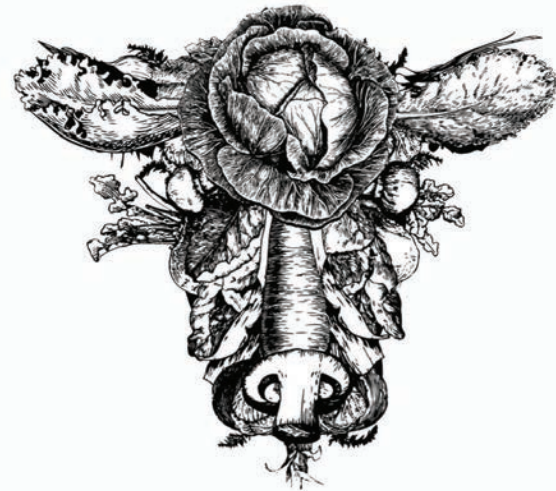
far as what’s going on socially and politically, I think there is a whole lot of stuff this country has to reckon with. There’s blood on its hands and shadows down its highways. Don’t get me wrong, I love America, but it will have its day in court.

**RRX:** Lastly, I know you have a new EP on the way. Let us know what’s on the horizon and what to expect in the near future.

**MP:** I have a new full length album in the future. It’s all finished, I’m just putting its release on hold until we stop needing so many ventilators. I’m releasing 3 vinyl records of previous albums. A vinyl version of my Nero EP can be pre-ordered off my Bandcamp, and I’m gonna say my new full length will be out in early spring, right before touring picks back up. After that, I’ll be out on the road for a while playing shows, romancing chewing gum diner waitresses and swallowing sunshine out in California.



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# Even Vampires Can Be Great Lovers

## MIRTH AND OTHER DARK TALES OF LOVE

BY ROB SMITIX

Celeste Plowden has such a way about her writing style that you are often left wondering if she herself actually had experienced what she writes about; even if it defies what we assume to be impossible.

**RRX:** Many may know you as an artist and I know you can sing too but today we are talking to Celeste the author. For those that do not know can you give us just a little background on yourself?

**CP:** I started out in New York, where I studied textile design at Parsons, and lived there for many years, until I moved upstate with my husband in the 1990s. Prior to that, I received a BFA in Art History with a minor in English literature, which studies have greatly influenced my writing style. In my lifetime I have been a fabric designer, real estate title examiner, fine artist, showroom model, singer, and fiction writer. Currently, I sell my paintings on a home decor site, search a few titles for local clients, write fiction, and sing a few blues tunes at local jams.

**RRX:** Your most recent release is *Mirth and Other Dark Tales of Love*. This is a collection of short stories, a couple of previews of upcoming works and of course the title story "Mirth". "Mirth" takes place in our local area which I think is so cool. What was it about Hudson, NY that compelled you to write?

*Author Celeste Plowden creates worlds scraped from the hairs erect on our necks, and we can't get enough.*

# CELESTE PLOWDEN

**CP:** I think Warren Street in Hudson is one of the great gems in our area. Just peeking into all of the shops of fantastic furniture and art objects takes me back in time, and I see many of the items as tidbits of history that add color to my story settings. I like the way that street goes on for such a long stretch of blocks, so many shops to explore within the older brick buildings. I thought of the story "Mirth", as I was rambling around there early one evening last summer as the sun was just beginning to set.

**RRX:** "Mirth" takes place in modern times but I know that you are very inspired by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and I also know many of your stories take place in the past. I imagine there is a great deal of research that comes with writing alongside history. How do you pull all of your research together and maintain accuracy when you write about the past?

**CP:** The historical settings I use in

my stories are periods of history that I have read about over the years, and am already very familiar with, especially in terms of period costumes, furniture, art, music, and many customs. But of course, I have reference books at home, to refresh my knowledge, and I also use the internet to look up old drawings or photos. I only write about places I have been to, for instance, Coney Island, but of course since I wasn't there in the 1920s, seeing old photographs from then, really helps me to get a better sense of place, making the story more interesting. Being an artist, I like a very visual setting for my stories.

**RRX:** So I have viewed a lot of your artwork, paintings etc. and I haven't found these works to be on the darker side of things. What is it about when you write that brings the darkness out?

**CP:** I search titles and create decorative paintings for a living, and while I have always enjoyed doing both of those jobs, I am doing what the client has

commissioned me to do. But when I write, it is strictly because of my love of classic fiction. I write about things that I'm interested in, and some of it is pretty dark, like ghosts and vampires. I like using those supernatural beings to describe deep, emotional longings, and mysteries within ourselves that some of us feel a need to figure out. Many parts of my stories come from things I have experienced, or people that I have known, but I like to ratchet up some of the romance by using characters who fall in love with a creature who is dangerous, or unattainable, or lives on forever. Never let the passion end!

**RRX:** So the word is, you have a novel coming out in the very near future, without revealing too much; what are we to expect?

**CP:** The Harpsichordist should be out sometime in July on Amazon (Kindle and paperback). It's a vampire novel that takes the reader on a trip through nearly three centuries in London, New

York, and Paris, with a man who was once a noteworthy builder of harpsichords. This vampire's quest for a mate, and his love of music are the main themes of the story. Vampires don't have to be that gory to be interesting, and Miles Beaumont flourishes in each age of history that he has existed in, including, the French Revolution, the Belle Epoch, the Roaring Twenties, contemporary times, and more.

**RRX:** Please let our audience know where we can find you online to keep up with what you are doing.

**CP:** Thanks, Rob. You can find my book, Mirth, (an Amazon best seller) available on Amazon, and The Harpsichordist, there as well, in a few weeks. I have an author's page on Facebook, and also on Goodreads. You can check out my artwork on Chairish.com, under the shop name of Cleo Plowden.

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# Not Incidental, But Essential

BY ART FREDETTE

A recent ruling by the New York State Liquor Authority has all but made live entertainment illegal.

Venues, who are already suffering from the effects of the pandemic, are now being crushed by the very agency in charge of their licensing. These establishments are in many ways the lifeblood of the local community and now they face yet another hurdle to their very survival.

I will emphatically state that COVID is Real!!! I will also stand by the statement that economic ruin is REAL and that is what this edict will bring.

Since March, we as a population, have been dealing with a daily onslaught of disease, misfortune, divisive political opinions and fear. For many people the arts and especially music are a respite from daily life. The people who create music are usually not famous, not rich and most likely your neighbor. Musicians do what they do for the love of the craft and often as a supplemental income to make ends meet. In short, local music is a community service and one that is needed, especially now.

The argument will be made that these rules are issued for our safety. OK...to a point. Numbers are falling. People, by in large, are following protocols and being compliant. I personally have seen patrons at local establishments admonish other customers who fail to do so. Are there bad apples and damned fools? Yes! But they are an exception and not the norm. So, the state government's reaction is to punish the entire "class" rather than deal with establishments that will not comply. This is not only draconian but foolhardy.

Didn't the SLA just recently "deputize" personnel from other departments to help with enforcement? And if a ruling like this has to be made, doesn't this prove that the action in itself was futile? Why is it futile, perhaps because the "deputies" are not properly trained in enforcement techniques or they just aren't fulfilling their mission. So, the state responds by putting down the hammer.

Let's now discuss the economic ramifications of this move. The first effected are musicians and performers, as comedy and dance are also forbidden. Do not be distracted by this effect, it is only the beginning. Musicians need a place to play. Those places are called venues. These establishments are often owned by a local individual or family and they have had an extremely hard time just keeping their doors open since the beginning of this event. Many establishments have been allowed to open at 50% capacity and they are doing their best to make this work but simple economics make long term viability a huge question mark. The additional cost of COVID protocols, the food requirement and the cost of labor make a slim profit margin almost invisible. Live entertainment is often the only way to bring extra people out and into an establishment.

You will say but the businesses got PPP loans, and many did, but many did not. The businesses who did receive loans are now out of funds. They believed the loan would hold them over until the crisis passed but this crisis seems too have no end. If you have ever known a small business owner, you know that the owner is usually the last person paid, as a rule, they take care of everyone else first. The PPP program



required a Schedule C form to be eligible and many small business owners didn't have said form because they live off what is left or put the money all back into their business with the hope of a future payout. That is just the reality, a reality that Washington and Albany will never understand.

Let's talk about the ripple effect of this latest action from Albany. The hobbling of the local music and performance scene will have far reaching repercussions. New York State establishments can not even advertise a musical act and if they do book a performance they cannot charge a cover, have a ticketed event and music must be "incidental" and not "draw". Why book any band or act that doesn't "draw". This seems counterintuitive. But, then again, nobody in office has ever been in that position.

Let's say musicians can't play, venues close. Guess what happens next. RIPPLE EFFECT. When a venue closes, people lose their jobs, owners go bankrupt, businesses close and then

the dominoes begin to fall. Every business has suppliers, and they are in turn impacted by these closures. Beer and wine distributors, food service suppliers, insurance companies, Spectrum, National Grid, landlords, and the list of the effected goes on. The employees that have lost their jobs will no longer be able to meet their obligations, thus the ripple grows.

Governments make money by one and only one device, taxes. Has the state considered that they are spiting themselves through this action? This will cause a severe drop in the sales tax income collected by NYS. How will they make up this shortfall?

This is not a political editorial. I do not care about what party you belong to. I care about small business, musicians and my friends. This is about jobs at the most local level. This is about the freedom the arts offer. I ask my readers to call your state and local representatives and save this vital industry.

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## The Northway (Cntd.)

*Continued from Page 13*

weren't finished, or songs that weren't fleshed out. It was nice to focus on some broader lyrical ideas this time around, and try to make this album experience a bit more dynamic of a listen.

**NM:** Usually someone brings a riff or lyrics, or even the skeleton of an entire song, and we just play it until we're all happy with what's there. I feel extremely lucky to be in a band with such talented musicians who have a similar taste as me, it makes the writing process fun and quick. Someone usually suggests an idea and everything one else loves it more times than not.

**RRX:** Describe your favorite/funniest local show.

**ZL:** My weirdest was in my old cover band, we played a backyard show in Albany for a bunch of biker dudes for \$300, and they invited us to their "man cave." We were all young, and had parents there. They were indulging in illicit substances and offered us \$300 more to play everything again, and tried to entice us saying there were going to be strippers. We left because we had school the next day I think.

**JL:** There have been many meme worthy moments in the Northway lore. There was this one time that sticks out to me and my memory. We were playing at The Hollow in Albany and one of the tracks that we played was "Party Dog" which is off the EP. Nick and I were hanging out after the set and there was this guy who was totally wrecked yelling "YEAH! PARTYDOG!" after everyone else's songs. It was pretty hilarious.

**RRX:** Anyone you want to give a shoutout to? Are there any other local bands you guys absolutely love and think everyone should listen to?

**JL:** Certainly. First and foremost I have to shout out my friends in

Ampevene. Awesome fusion of prog and psychedelic and always a great show. Start the Reactor and Ghost Walker are some of my favorite heavier bands I've seen. Outside of rock music I really like the singer songwriter stylings of Taylor Wing and Maddy Hicks. A hip hop group called Social Propaganda from Burnt Hills put out a project called Shed Light that I got to play on a little bit and I'm a huge fan of.

**NM:** I gotta give shoutouts to bands that I listen to and legitimately enjoy, Grape Juice, Lemon of Choice, Raspberry Jam, Start the Reactor, and Maddy Hicks.

**RRX:** This final question will be an opportunity for you guys to say whatever you want; promote your upcoming or already released works, talk about future plans or anything you think the readers should know.

**JL:** The new album should be out in September assuming all goes smoothly. More details will be revealed shortly on our social media, check out The Northway on FB and @thenorthway-band on Instagram and give us a follow if you want. Also, #SAVEOURSTAGES! Please support the local venues in any way you can! Without them I'll have to go see Sunday afternoon Kidz Bop shows at SPAC for \$40 for musical entertainment. Jokes aside, tell your legislators to save local music.



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