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September 2021
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Former guitar player for Television talks about the road so far and the road ahead.

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Richard Lloyd: Tuned In Alchemy

A new tour puts Richard Lloyd, formerly of Television, on an epic journey and a cosmic mission.

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Richard Lloyd. Photo provided.

The first thing you learn about publishing is: 12 point, Times New Roman, double-spaced. Second thing you learn is that no one wants your memoir, unless you're famous. But if you're famous? If you managed to reshape the landscape of American culture from stages and studios, then you'll find you have three pounds of gold between your ears.

Richard Lloyd is a founding member of the seventies groundbreaking group, Television. His memoir was released a few years ago, but it's past the

initial rush when adrenaline pushes the answers to a million questions. It's had time to breathe, and all involved time to reflect.

I sit down with Richard Lloyd and we discuss obscure grammatical minutiae.

RRX: Everything's Combustible: The Memoirs of an Alchemical Guitarist came out in paperback in February of 2019, and in other forms over the past few years. But none of those are when you slapped "T-H-E E-N-D" on the file, or the manuscript, or the backs

of five-hundred pizza boxes; however it went. When was that, and did you celebrate in any way?

RL: I had to read it then, aloud, for the digital, for people who like to read books. When I was done with that, I was, Whew, because it took about twelve hours, all told, to read the book out loud. After that, it was back to work – no rest for the wicked.

RRX: You are one of the founding members of the legendary New York band, Television, and while I'm asking

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RIC ORLANDO

Hudson Valley Chef dishes out sweet food and some pretty sweet music, too.

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JIMMY AQUINO

Actor, Bartender, Comics Reporter. Jimmy Aquino will never cease to surprise us.

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about your book, not mentioning that is talking Moby Dick without mentioning whales. Television has had an indelible impact on not just bands, but genres. Did you at all feel the weight of that would impact the simple telling of your story?

RL: Television isn't the whale, first of all. It's a band, and I'm very proud to have been in the band for thirty-five years, and I have nothing negative to say about the experience. Much like getting a nice crew into a flying saucer, and having fun all over the place and playing music, as one could've called it, 'not of this world.'

RRX: You've had a solo career, on and off since Television first disbanded in 1978. You've produced a solid number of solo albums, and except for drums, you've had your hand at every instrument. I imagine a solo career gives you more control over your sound, but is it more or less difficult, do you think, to market a solo career?

RL: Oh, it's much more difficult. Been told by individuals, 'we're signing bands, not artists.' Of course, a lot of people get signed as individuals, and then accumulate a band around them. So I guess it's six of one and a half dozen of the other. Nowadays, I have a band. And I've had the same band for a couple of years, and it feels very good to be in a band; it's like being in a tank – you know it's firm, it rolls, and it does well. So I'm happy about that. It's terrible having to scramble for backup musicians and people to play various other instruments. And I don't like to go out alone.

RRX: I'm a new fan. I have my nose buried in my computer all day, so I live under silicon, which is a rock, sort of. New fans don't really have that "bond with the band." That older fans have. Do you think new fans have things in common, demographically, with older fans, or is it a different set now?

RL: I don't think it's about any of that, I think it's the fact that as things mature, that period of puberty – whatever gets in at that time becomes the central core of their lifetime listening experience. For instance, I was born in '51, so when I grew up, I was a little older than hippies, but a little young to be a beatnik. So I was in, like, a stranded zone between those two cultural events, or movements. So I basically acted like a voyeur of the social movements that took place. I didn't participate in either, really.

RRX: As I said above, alot, a metric ton, of bands have been influenced by Television, and you were a node in the evolutionary tree of alternative rock. When you hear one of the bands that have listed you, or Television, as an influence, are you flattered, or is it a weird feeling? Do you try to listen for the influence, or let it ride?

RL: Well, first I let it ride. If I hear something, I hear something. It's honorable. If people aren't ripping off the melodies and the structures completely, but the stylistic approach, I'm very proud of. And when I hear another band mention us as an influence, it's rewarding.

RRX: This is where you get to answer the question I never asked. The City never sleeps, but does it take cat naps? Can you still buy the Brooklyn Bridge as long as you never claim it? Enlighten, educate, emote – the floor is yours.

RL: I'm going on tour in September, starting the 12th, so the second week in September. I stay out until the beginning of October. So if you're in any of the areas where I'll be playing, please come by and say hi. And enjoy the music. Because we're well rehearsed and we haven't played out in two years because of this viral thing. And I would hope people get vaccinated, and come and join us.



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Johnny Temple: Pages for the People

Punk bassist and publisher of Akashic Books Johnny Temple talks about the true literary market

Johnny Temple. Photo by Sigal Photos.

BY LIAM SWEENEY

It seems like with everything, there's an establishment, and there's an anti-establishment. In music, there are huge conglomerate record labels, and there are Indie labels. In the book world, it's no different. Behind the scenes, you have about five major publishers that dominate your local bookstores, and a wild west of indie publishers. And one of the handful of sheriffs in this vast Dodge is Akashic Books.

Akashic was founded by Johnny Temple in 1996 to gather and preserve the world's cool literature from the prophesied global destruction of Y2K.

Nah, I'm making that up. Welcome to literature. Johnny was also a bassist in the DC music scene.

I sit down with Johnny to talk about the Oxford comma and the rising cost of ink.

RRX: You're not just a bassist. You're also the publisher of Akashic Books, a Brooklyn-based independent publisher that has been pretty much an oasis in the indie scene. As a writer who has books chugging along in indie, it gives me a warm fuzzy to know that you've been around since 1999. That's practical immortality for indies. How?

JT: Akashic started as a record label in 1996, and then we published our first book in 1997. I never thought it was going to be easy to start a book publishing company, but I had the great fortune of starting the company as a hobby when I was a full-time musician in Girls Against Boys, and we had a few years where we made a lot of money, so when we signed to Geffen Records in 1996, I had disposable income for the first time. So I started the company with two friends, Bobby Sullivan and Mark Sullivan, basically as a hobby, and Mark and Bobby walked out of the company early on, but I kept it going. I had this really great grace

period of like four or five years where the company didn't need to make any money. I don't think I could've gotten it off the ground without that grace period.

Also, I think, anyone who runs a record label, or a publishing company – you do it because you think you have good taste. And I think I have good taste. That's what the success of my company ultimately comes down to, being able to identify great books. We publish a lot of African American authors, writers from the African diaspora, Jamaican writers, Trinidadian writers, and we've helped to launch some really important literary careers.

I've always thought that if you can somehow manage to keep the doors of your business open, you'll allow for the possibility of success to come along at some point. And in 2011 we had a mega smash hit, our fake children's book for

parents called “Go the Fuck to Sleep.” And that book has sold several million copies, and just continues to sell large amounts of books year after year. Single handedly, that book stabilizes the company and allows us to keep going.

RRX: Akashic’s tagline, from the Google machine, is “reverse-gentrification of the literary world.” And it taps into something that writers know that many people, including readers, don’t. There’s a social strata, an elitism. Is reversing that a founding principle of Akashic, or was it something you ran across in the business, and picked up the cause?

JT: That’s a great question that I don’t think I’ve ever been asked. That was a founding principle, It wasn’t something we came up with – that tagline was devised by fellow DC punk rocker Chris Thomson who came up with that, a number of years into our company’s existence. He came up with it based on the work we were doing. I don’t like the elitism in the book publishing business. Sometimes it feels like the book business is largely based in Manhattan, a bunch of very well educated, mostly white people, gazing adoringly at themselves and their classmates from Ivy league schools and publishing, sort of, one another. And then complaining that no one reads anymore. Whereas, when you say no one reads anymore; have you tried to sell your books to everybody, across the social strata? It seems to me that huge swaths of the population are not marketed to with books – basically ignored by the book business. And that’s slowly changing, but we want to be part of that change. We need to get more books to more people, and more relevant books to more people, and that’s one of the more exciting challenges of publishing books.

RRX: One of your authors is Les Claypool, bassist from Primus. He’s such an amazing player, and he’s constantly collaborating with people. I can

say he’s stellar, but you’ve worked with him. I’m guessing you knew him before he published with Akashic, but what the hell do I know? What’s his story, with his book, or with any random hijinks?

JT: Before publishing Les, I had met him. Girls Against Boys had played in a festival in Belgium. We shared a stage with Primus, and I think I met him in passing, but we didn’t know each other. The book actually came to Akashic through a literary agent, the book publisher’s equivalent of a rock ‘n’ roll manager. When the book was submitted to us, I was very excited. This is Les Claypool’s novel, “South of the Pumphouse” I read the book, and I loved it. We decided to publish it. We’ve been very successful with it. We’re in the tenth or eleventh printing. And then, along the way, Les and his team talked to us about publishing an oral history of Primus. So we did the Primus book, which was also just such a great process. Les and Primus; they have so much integrity. Talk about process, you know, it’s like they do everything right, and they’re wonderful to work with. I don’t have too many hijinks, other than... this isn’t hijinks, but Les will play every once in a while in New York City, and whether it’s Primus, or part of another band, I’ll go to the show, and I’ll get to go backstage, and it’s very interesting to be backstage at a rock concert as a book publisher. Whereas I’ve been backstage at thousands of rock concerts as a musician.

I hope to do more books with Les Claypool. He’s got a lot of stories, obviously, inside of him, and I’m a bass player, and he’s a huge inspiration. What he can do with a bass is just sort of jaw dropping. There’s so much that he does that I would never be able to do.

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Justyna Kostek: Staging Greatness

The stage loves Justyna Kostek, and whether it's Helen of Troy, NY or Dietrich Rides Again, she loves it right back.

BY LIAM SWEENEY



Justyna Kostek.
Photo provided.

Whether it's a song lyric, a visual motif, a short piece of flash fiction, a movie, or a play, all art tells a story. But whereas almost every form of abovementioned art can be reproduced and spread far and wide, some forms lose something. A live show's not the same as a recording. But a play in a theater is a true "had to be

there."

People who gravitate to the theater have passion and big personalities. They have to; the stage is hungry. And Justyna Kostek has spent her life feeding that hunger act by act, crowd by crowd. She's made us laugh and cry, and she's here.

I sit down with Justyna, and we dis-

cuss red velvet curtains.

RRX: A few years ago, you directed and starred in *Helen of Troy, NY*. It played nearly two-hundred times in New York and came up here to rave reviews. What is it about? Can you describe it, and how was it coming up to the Capital Region and performing a play about the Collar City? Did anyone not like it for whatever reason?

JK: Doing *Helen of Troy NY* was Don Rittner's idea. We had just met and when he learned that I had a theater background asked me to codirect it with him. Don had the play for years and wanted to do it in Troy because the collar bosses in the city in 1923 would not let it play because it was a spoof on them. It was George Kaufman's second play and a big hit in the city and around the country but not in Troy. Don wanted some poetic justice so he and I put the show together and had six sold out performances back in 2015. I also played the part of the French photographer. The original *Helen* starred Helen Ford who was born in Troy so we thought that would be a great hook also on doing it here. The play was about an imaginary Troy collar company and the two founders who fell out with each other but it was Helen who brought them back together by inventing a new collar. The music was written by Kalmar and Ruby the same guys who did

music for the Marx Brothers movies. Don and I are talking about doing it again in Troy next year since it was so well received.

RRX: So let's talk about your current project, *Dietrich Rides Again*, about the legendary Marlene Dietrich. She was a stunning actress and a powerful woman. She has qualities that I imagine would make anyone want to pay homage. Was there anything specific about Dietrich that caught your fancy enough to portray her?

JK: In 2016 I was starring in an original musical *Bound To Rise* at the Medicine Show Theater in New York City and the music director of the show kept nudging me that I look and sound like this famous Hollywood movie star Marlene Dietrich and I must read up on her. By the 30th time he told me that I decided to read up on her and got so inspired by her life. I got together with one of the directors at Medicine Show – Oliver Conant and we co-wrote the show.

The fact that she used her international stardom to fight the evil during the WWII caught my heart right away. In 1929 when already so famous from her movies made in Germany, she moved to United States and joined the US army and performed on the war field for the American soldiers for the whole 5 years in Europe. She refused

Hitler's several requests to come star in his propaganda movies for millions of dollars. She saved many Jewish people from Europe and brought them to America. When she was as famous as Marilyn Monroe and she didn't even have to move her finger. I admire that so much. She died penniless.

The more I read, the more films I watched, I must say, I fell under her spell. Think of any of her film performances, how she holds her partner's gaze. The way she has of admitting you to her beauty! There's her stillness, something in her that may have belonged more to the theatre than to movies, and, of course, the lighting she learned from her beloved Von Sternberg, and something else, too. She's a great clown. Now when I say that to Americans it can be misunderstood, but when I say she is a great clown I say it with utmost respect, as one would say it of Charlie Chaplin—whom she knew, of course!

RRX: Marlene Dietrich was unique for her time. She broke rules and norms, and she was unapologetic in being who she was. She operated in an industry run by powerful men and she didn't flinch. She had to be a great character, but how do you portray her in an age where empowerment isn't as revolutionary as it was during her time?

JK: She had a good mentor: Mae West. I do think her example remains an empowering one to the LGBTQ+ community. Whenever I advertise my show at the Pride events in NYC I meet many other Marlenes. The theater industry is still runned by men. On my journey with Dietrich Rides Again I certainly encountered and continue to encounter many things that Dietrich herself had to deal with as a woman in the showbusiness.

RRX: Dietrich Rides Again is an interweaving of theater and film, at least thematically. So I'll ask this in a

space where many people don't experience both. What can we get in theater that we can't get in film? And do you prefer films that started in theaters, or plays that take from films, if you had to choose one?

JK: You know it's interesting I was thinking of Cold War, which has some of the same kind of singing my grandmother did, and it's certainly very theatrical! In old age, you know, Marlene dismissed her silent film career. In the wonderful documentary by Max Schell she even calls The Blue Angel, her first film, "quatsch" or kitsch or whatever she says but I think its fun.

As an artist starring in the film you don't get the immediate response from the audience where as in theater you are literally "serving the audience" your humanity. That is what's different. Sharing the beauty of humanity together. Artists—serving, the audience-responding.

RRX: This is where you answer the

question I didn't ask. Any cool superstitions behind the curtain? Alternate uses for pancake makeup? Educate, enlighten, emote – the floor is yours.

JK: In Europe if the script falls on the ground during rehearsals you must step on it before picking it up otherwise it's "bad luck". In Poland if you don't take a shot of vodka before doing certain kind of traditional productions you will get boo'ed by the cast. I believe in the Netherlands the shot of vodka is replaced with the joint of marijuana.



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Ric Orlando: Born Hungry



Ric Orlando.
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Be it gourmet fare or rock-n-roll flair, Ric Orlando serves up a fresh adventure.

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Food is beyond fuel. If it weren't, we wouldn't need eighty percent of what's in our supermarkets. It is our comfort, our passion, and our obsession, for good or bad. And the people who provide us this food, should we not simply cook at home, are largely unseen and unsung.

Ric Orlando is a chef and restaurateur. He and his wife Liz co-owned the highly prized and successful New World Home Cooking Company in Woodstock/Saugerties since the early nineties, and from 2009-2020, the New World Bistro Bar in Albany. The Chronograph Mag named him 2021 Best Hudson Valley Chef, and we second that.

We sat down with Ric to discuss the flavor of life.

RRX: The culinary arts share a lot with other art forms, but in one regard, there's more of a trust needed. People can feel a little vulnerable when they're expanding their palates. How do you work with more exotic fare, when people are in new territory and don't know what to expect? Is there more pressure on exotic dishes?

RO: Well yeah, there is. I had a pretty successful career in getting people to eat things that they don't normally think they would like. I know that delicious is delicious, and getting people to try new things takes a couple of particular skills. One of them is menu writing, and how you write your menu. A lot of contemporary menus don't use a lot of words. They basically list all the ingredients in the dish, but that can be intimidating, so I, being a lyricist and a songwriter, and a poet, I've always used crafty witticisms and metaphors and analogies to give people an idea of what something like, say, a borage root tastes like. I think it's

important to use words that give people a little comfort and curiosity, and not just a list of ingredients. It's interesting working with cooks. Once they become exposed to a certain ingredient, I used borage before, it could be sea urchin, and it could be whatever... they get accustomed to it, used to it – they see it every day. But the average American diner doesn't have the same culinary vocabulary as a chef, so I always found it was my duty to give people a comfort zone by using descriptions to paint a picture of what they're going to be tasting.

RRX: To be a chef is to wield a great creative power. But, since everybody has to eat, it can be a power most easily taken for granted. Perhaps not at your level, but how many people think of the person cooking their food at a chain restaurant somewhere? How can the average eater best appreciate their meals beyond just tipping, wherever they eat?

RO: There's two really great ways to appreciate your meal. One is by thanking the kitchen specifically, maybe even sending a tip to the kitchen. You know, kitchen workers are not allowed to take part in the tipping process by law, but they have so much to do with the customer's experience. To throw a five-dollar bill to the cooks goes a long way. And secondly is word of mouth. There are online reviews, people like to use their power to be negative, but to use your power to be positive, it makes everybody feel good. Don't be fooled; all restaurants read their online reviews and share them with their team. So when we would get great online reviews, the kitchen would always hear about it, and it always made them feel like they had a sense of accomplishment. That being

drastically wrong, we approached the kitchen with it also as an illustration of what we can do better. And then, of course, on the last level of online reviews, some are just idiotic, and we didn't always bother sharing them with people, because why hurt morale over somebody who didn't get the table they wanted, or there was a fly on their glass, and that has nothing to do with what the kitchen is producing, so we didn't bother bringing the kitchen down with something like that.

RRX: One thing that you see in popular culture is the people that go to a fancy restaurant and sit down to a plate that looks like a painting, and all the food can fit on their finger. Is there a reason that meals in "upper-star" restaurants have such portions? Is it artistic, or is it economic, or practical?

RO: I've always circled around with that, because I always like to give a substantial meal. I think there are a couple of facets to your question. One, is, if you're in a higher-end restaurant and there are a lot of interesting dishes on the menu, many people eat multiple courses, you know, they don't just eat a big meal, like a big fish fry, or something; they want to try three or four things. If you're putting full-sized portions, it's hard to foray into the menu on a deeper level. Also, money is a factor, because, there is; let's compare a fast food restaurant that's using frozen low-end pre-made products versus a kitchen that is all-in with craft and with ingredient selection. When you're shopping for local ingredients or organic ingredients or unique ingredients, they're all very expensive. You can't afford to give sixteen ounces of Elk, for instance, to somebody for twelve ninety-five like a chain restaurant can sell a sixteen-ounce 'B' grade steak for twelve ninety-five. So it has a lot to do with the quality of ingredients as well.

RRX: The spice rack in my house is messy and disorganized, but that's who

I am. I have my favorites, like an Instant Karma spice I picked up at a small local shop, and a jar of black Italian truffle salt (okay, not a spice) that I swear by. You have your own Flavor Maker Spices. Please tell me what I'm about to add to my spice rack.

RO: There are six; the whole thing is being rebranded as Ric Orlando's Best, which is kind of a West Indian thing, they say 'Oh, Joe's Best.' Flavor Makers Spices are the dry rubs, so until you've tried my jerk, or my kesh, which is my Moroccan seasoning, or my dough, you know, you don't know what you're missing. They're all really, really balanced and delicious, and all of my seasonings were created for my restaurants before I decided to launch them retail, so I tell people that if they miss my food, buy my spices. One of the things I did as a chef was to make sure, especially with having two restaurants, fifty miles apart, was to make sure that every dish was consistent, because consistency is one of the most important things. One of the reasons to go back to a restaurant is to have what you had before, or have something of the same quality you had before. I standardized all of that. Every recipe in my kitchen, the menus were standardized. So those spices are all of my classic flavors.

RRX: I never thought much of cooking until I read Kitchen Confidential. Anthony Bourdain was someone that made me think of how universal, and imperative, good cooking is to life. It's beyond epicurean exploration. It's a communication that is as old as we are. What type of cooking brings you closest to the root of that communication?

RO: You know, there are many types of cooking, right? There's home cooking, there's family cooking, there's party cooking, and then there's individual-specific plating. I think the food that brings me closest to that is when I'm cooking for small groups of people. Cooking for, like I do private dinners,

eight or ten people. So I've got a little captive audience that allows me to do what I'd like to do. That really hits my sweet spot.

RRX: You have a song with Andy Chernoff of The Dictators, called "Born Hungry." It's grooving, very down-home rock 'n' roll, a lot of fun. Very food-centered, of course? How did it happen? And is this the peak of the mountain for you and music, or are you still looking to climb?

RO: I started in my teens playing music and working in restaurants to support my playing music because obviously, you can't make enough money playing music, especially independent underground music. And when I was maybe sixteen years-old, I heard The Dictators for the first time. It was so refreshing in an era of bands like Kansas and REO Speedwagon and Styx to hear guys wearing blue jeans and sneakers singing about getting drunk at McDonald's and chasing girls and things that

we did as teenagers, so I related to The Dictators. Fast forward twenty years and I had my restaurant in Saugerties and Handsome Dick Manitoba, who was the singer for The Dictators, started coming into my restaurant on a kind of regular basis. I think he might have had a place in the Saugerties area. He was actually on the Jimmy Fallon show and mentioned my restaurant, because Jimmy Fallon is also from Saugerties.

Because of Handsome Dick, I met Andy Chernoff, who was the master-minds, the brains, the founder, songwriter, producer of The Dictators. And my realtor friend had sold him a house right outside of Woodstock, heading out towards Phoenicia. So I met Andy, great. He loved the restaurant, started coming in pretty regularly. About six months later, I decided I wanted to start a fun little throwaway band called 'Ric the Chef.' We did old, underground

Continued on Page 43...



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Jimmy Aquino: Comics Renaissance Man

The host of the Comic News Insider podcast has many trades, and many stories.

BY DICK BEACH

Jimmy Aquino.
Photo provided.

On Comic News Insider, Jimmy Aquino's bio starts: Jimmy Aquino is the pretty one. He wrote that. Actor, bartender, podcaster on all things Comics, he is an interesting character. Read on and get to know an interesting renaissance man.

RRX: I'm speaking with Jimmy Aquino. He is the host of the Comic News Insider (<https://www.comicnewsinsider.com/>). He's a bartender. He has been an actor and generally an interesting guy. So first, thank you very much for joining us.

JA: Well, thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

RRX: I'd like to get a feel for your

background. Are you a native New Yorker? Are you not a native New Yorker? What were your influences when you were younger that have gotten you to the place you're in?

JA: Well, I grew up in Jacksonville Beach, Florida and moved to New York in my early 20s to pursue, like many people do, an acting career.

RRX: How did that work?

JA: Yeah, pretty good for a while. I enjoyed it, had a great time. I did mostly musical theater as a singer and dancer, and all that stuff. Did about four shows a year. Between those shows, I either bartended or waited tables.

Around 2000, after my last

national tour, I decided to step away for a bit. A bit became pretty permanent. I still enjoy it and love it, my friends still do it. But I just didn't feel like I wanted to do it anymore.

RRX: You and I met because – as my wife and I are wont to say – so we were sitting in this bar and we met this guy.

JA: Some great stories happen that way.

RRX: Well, they do, they do. You are currently – and I don't know exactly for how long – at a pretty cool place in Hell's Kitchen.

JA: Yeah, I lived in Hell's Kitchen when I first moved here. It's always

been my spot. I still hang out in that area, although unfortunately some of my favorite spots closed down due to the pandemic. There are still a lot of great spots there. I've worked all around that area.

I found this spot almost 20 years ago. I've been there almost 20 years now. I love it and it's really great.

RRX: Was it happenstance that you became acquainted with all things comic? We just had an article in the Xperience Monthly about an artist for a number of pretty popular comic books.

JA: Well, I've always been an avid comic book reader since I was a kid. Dipped in and out of it, then really got back into it in my late teens/early 20s. My comic stack every week was huge. Even when I was an actor on the road, the first thing I'd do was seek out the local comic shop wherever we were – to visit it, to get my comics for that week.

Then, when podcasts started happening around, I guess, 2004, I was listening to a tech one because, again, I'm not very tech savvy, so I thought maybe I can learn something. So, my former co-host, Joe, and I actually started it with a friend of his because I was busy doing a sketch comedy. But within that year, 2005, April, when we started, I did probably half of the 20 episodes we did that year. It was just love of comics

RRX: How many people would you say you meet outside what I will call the “artist community”? Is that a regular thing? Does it only happen to me? It seems that it can sometimes be a bit random.

JA: Yeah, for sure. That’s what New York is so great about, I think. I remember my first two weeks here, I ran into some guy riding his bike that was from my hometown. He was visiting friends. Like, what? I hadn’t seen him in ten years.

But really, a lot is the podcast now. Yes, at the bar. Being in New York City in Hell’s Kitchen, which is also the theater district, I meet several. I’ve met so many, like a lot of big names have come through that bar, and then different places I’ve worked in.

But then, going to conventions for the podcast. That’s where I meet so many people, obviously. Most of my really good friends have come out of that.

RRX: A lot of people’s incomes were hit hard this past 18 months. How was your experience surviving the strain of it?

JA: The first three months, when everything was locked down, obviously no one was going anywhere. Especially in the restaurant business, we couldn’t do anything. We reopened July just for outdoor dining. But those three months of just being at home, I’d go once a week and do a grocery store run.

I really discovered my love of cooking about four years ago. Pre-pandemic, I’d have a friend over at least once a week to podcast and whoever came over, I’d cook for. That was my late-night sessions of YouTube, which were cooking videos. I was really challenging myself. That was really fun. I’d put up a picture and my friends were like, “We can’t wait to come back over to enjoy that food!”

But also, besides doing the regular weekly Comic News Insider podcast, my friend Heidi McDonald – she’s a

comics journalist; she used to be an editor for Nickelodeon, Disney, DC, and all these things. She’s the BaRRX-ara Walters of comics journalism, basically.

I posted, now is a good time to catch up on movies I’ve never seen. One was the Evil Dead Trilogy. I’d never seen it and I –

RRX: Oh my lord, those are the best.

JA: I know. I finally watched it. So, I decided, I’m gonna watch it and she suggested, “Why don’t we podcast about it? Like the first-time watcher.” Oh, that’s great. That’s a great idea.

We started a side podcast and we just combined... The name of her website is the Beat or Comic Beat, mine is Comic News Insider. So, we called ourselves Comic Beat Insider.

That was a nice side project that just only recently we decided to take a little step back ‘cause now things are opening and we’re busier now. But we’re still gonna do it off and on. We closed out with K-pop Month because I’d fallen down a deep well of K-pop. That was a really fun side project.

Podcasting, cooking, and watching TV is pretty much what kept me busy.

RRX: Do you have any projects or things that you’re working on that are upcoming that you’re looking to try to develop? Where do you stand on that?

JA: With the side podcast, Comic Insider has taken a hiatus. I still do specials on... the weekly show, Comic News Insider, is basically news, reviews, and maybe an interview, although I started doing the interviews separately because interviewers like to do long ones.

I do interview specials, where I just interview a writer, artist, actor. I just interviewed my friend Grace yesterday. She’s a big YouTuber, podcaster, actress, comedienne. She’s the voice of Cindy Bear in the new Jellystone HBO Max series based on Yogi Bear. So, we talked a lot about that, just doing a

catch-up since we haven’t talked in years.

RRX: Are you optimistic about the new and reworked version of Suicide Squad?

JA: I’m very optimistic. I can’t wait. The trailer was fantastic. It looks really good. Word of mouth already is that it’s really good, so. I can’t wait. What, in a couple of days it comes out? So yeah, definitely gonna be checking that out.

I also love talking to voice over actors. I’ve interviewed so many over the years ‘cause obviously a lot of animation comes to ComicCon. Last time, I stayed with Tom Kinney, who’s the voice of SpongeBob. His voice is in every cartoon you can think of pretty much anyway. He’s so talented and so nice, and just a generally great guy.

RRX: To conclude what I will call the official part of the interview I like to ask a question. That question is, if there’s something that you want to say

to the world. It can be anything you like. It can be how you feel about things, or things you’re passionate about, or anything. What would you say to the world?

JA: Wow. Hmm. So many things, then I can think of nothing at the same time. Hmm. Let me think about that for a second. Hmm. The first thing I can think of is the obvious. Be kind and care about your fellow human, things like that, which unfortunately we have really seen the opposite of during this past year and a half in a lot of people. Check in on friends and see how they’re doing, especially during times like this. Just show some love. Show some love to your friends. Even if you think they don’t need it, give them a holler. You never know what the slightest little hello might do for someone’s day.



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Who Says You Can't Read Punk Rock?

Musician and author Matthew Ryan Lowery brings a life of punk to the written page.

Matthew Ryan Lowery.
Photo provided.

BY ROB SMITTIX

If you're looking for a great read about the music business from the standpoint of a young band just trying to earn their stripes then Matthew Ryan Lowery's newest book "Trouble Bored" is for you. It also will make a great gift for the music lover in your circle.

RRX: When I received the package with your new book Trouble Bored, in retrospect I wish I would've done one of those YouTube unboxing videos. Just opening it up, I was impressed with all of the little extras, it was a nice touch and the book has such a soft feel to it.

Matt: That's exactly what it is, a soft touch cover.

RRX: Really proud of this book for

you, tell us about the story.

Matt: The story is based on a bunch of small experiences that I had growing up playing in punk rock bands in the Capital District; all of the trials and tribulations that come with that. A while back I was interested in writing a screen play, the book started out as a screenplay. All of my favorite movies usually either take place in a day or a weekend... So I was trying to piece together this idea taking different stories from my history with bands and piece it together as a collage for a one weekend all-out banger.

RRX: That would be one hell of a weekend.

Matt: That was the premise for Trouble Bored. Started as a screenplay. I went through all of the learning process for that and it was my first attempt at writing fiction. I was happy with the screenplay but I had no way or ins to the movie-making industry, so I decided I would push out a novel with it, I added more and I'm pretty happy with the result.

RRX: I love the localness to the story as well, you talk about Rotterdam. I haven't read many books that mention Rotterdam.

Matt: Yeah Rotterdam is a town nobody really ever mentions. I think if you're from Rotterdam you tend to tell

people that you're from Schenectady. It's rare enough you find somebody that can even pronounce Schenectady properly. And if I am ever out of town I'd say I'm from Albany.

RRX: And if you're over seas just say you're from New York or you could even say you're from America.

Matt: If you want to.

Both: (Laugh)

RRX: I am aware of at least one other book that you've written.

Matt: I did, I wrote a book called Abominous. It was a collaboration I did with my friend Drew Kline who owns Bloodmoon Collective Tattoo in East Greenbush. He owns a brand called

Abominous which is his take on abstract horror, usually black and white. I pitched the idea that I could write abstract narratives to go with his abstract art and by putting the two together it could create a Pandora's Box type book. I want to make you uncomfortable while reading it, same as how some people are off-put by Ouija boards, they may not want to even touch it. So we did that and it went well.

RRX: But with your new book (Trouble Bored) I am so happy that the story revolves around music and the punk rock scene. After all you were in some pretty cool bands. Hijinx of course comes to mind.

Matt: My other bands were Radiation Squad & The Addison Boys (which both had members of Hijinx).

RRX: I imagine the book has some loosely-based experiences from Hijinx?

Matt: Although the book is based on my time growing up and playing shows with Hijinx, it is certainly not a

biography of Hijinx in anyway. The stories are based on true things that happened but I don't want to get into what's true and what's not. There's a lot of embellishment and creative aspects that make it work for the weekend tale that I am trying to tell.

RRX: Even The Bible embellished a little bit.

Matt: Well you know it's fiction.

RRX: Right! Your book, your book is fiction.

Matt: It's a fictional memoir, a punk rock American Graffiti or Stand By Me.

RRX: The main character 19 year old Grayson Winters. Could he be based on you?

Matt: Yeah, he's a bass player and I was the bass player. He's at a crossroads basically, the band can go far but also like so many bands they face roadblocks. How are they going to get it together? He's starting to notice other members of the band looking for an out

or a back-up plan, if things don't take off. Grayson in the book much like I was in real life is a work-horse grinding, looking for shows, looking for label support and all of that. The conflict starts to become that Grayson doesn't know anything else, what could the back-up plan be if there was one? And when do you kick that plan into action? Things are going well for the band but there's self destruction at the same time.

When you're in a band you might be at a show until 2AM because you're waiting for the bar to get done so you can get paid. Then you're get home, you sleep all day, wake up, go to work some dishwasher job and it looks like you're slacking around. You start to face the societal pressure. Is this guy a loser or is he working his ass off?

RRX: Well that's what's great about the age of Grayson (main character), he's 19. He doesn't have a wife or kid or a mortgage to worry about. It's the best

age to chase dreams.

Matt: The guys end up getting a chance to get on a show with a huge band that they grew up listening to, a chance to play with their heroes. So they have to drop everything that they're doing. Grayson has to round the boys up, get them in the van and get them a couple hours away for the show. That's where we enter that territory, the real behind the scenes, meeting those bigger bands and getting to know your heroes or perhaps you shouldn't meet your heroes.

RRX: Well we don't want to give too much of the story away but I did want to make sure people knew where they could get their hands on a copy.

Matt: The book is available at my website matthewryanlowery.com, on Amazon and at the Barnes & Noble in Colonie Center you can find signed copies. I hope people give it a shot, I would love to know what people think.

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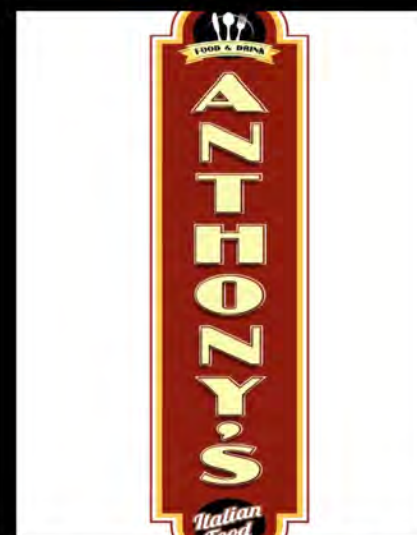
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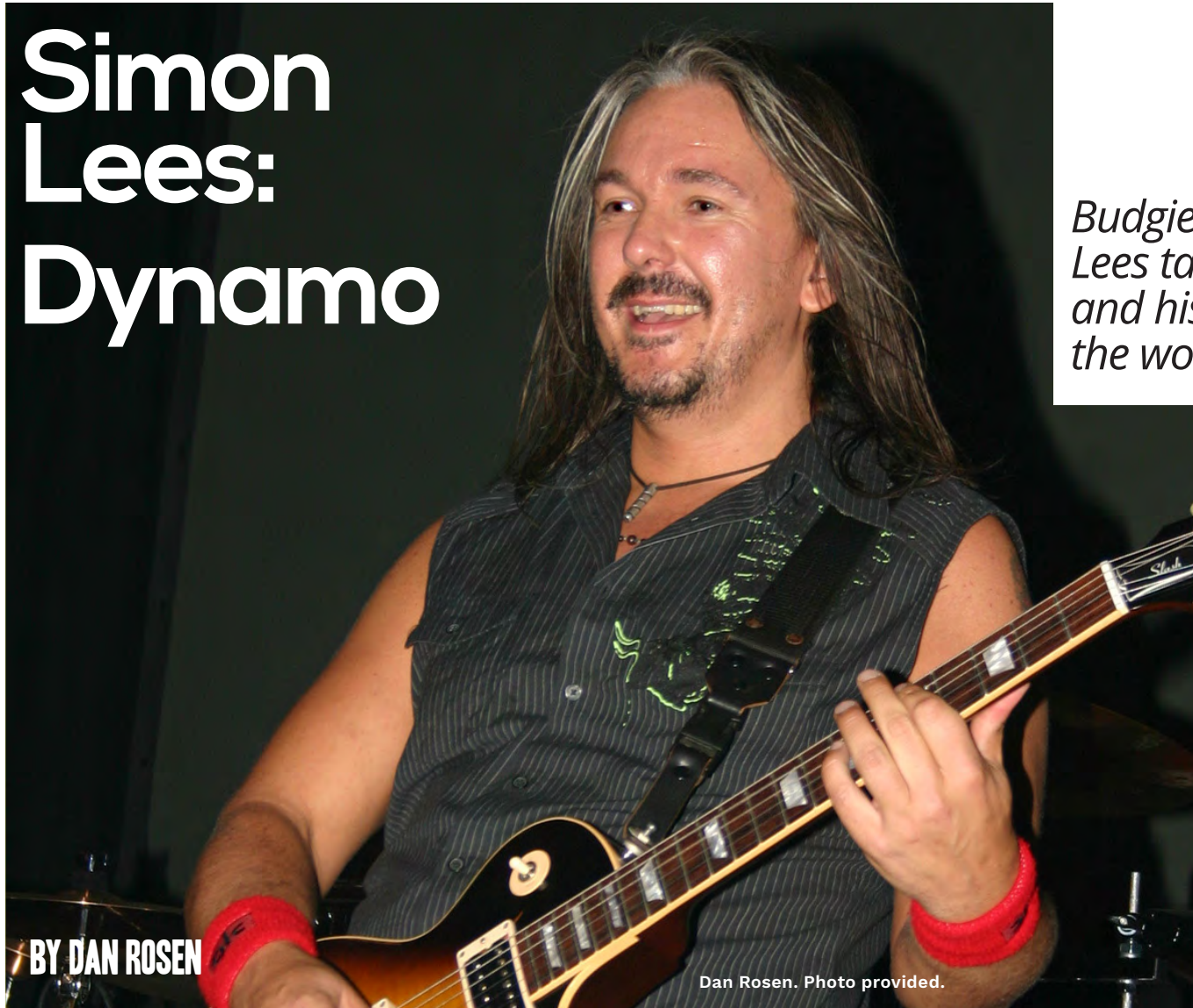
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Simon Lees: Dynamo

Budgies' guitar player Simon Lees talks about the band, and his storied time through the world of metal.



BY DAN ROSEN

Dan Rosen. Photo provided.

Simon Lees is a Swiss Army Knifem musician. He sings like an angel, plays guitar like a demon, pens lyrics like Byron. He loves to teach guitar, and to ride his bicycle all over the West Midlands. And in his spare time, he holds bible meetings and leads the Wolverhampton choir. His “pyjamas” have a big “G-clef” emblazoned on the chest.

Okay ... some of these things aren't true. He doesn't ride all over the Midlands. And he doesn't wear “pyjamas”: the G-clef is a tattoo...

He's been in a lot of bands, including Nitebreed, Budgie, and Anubis.

He was the last guitarist of Budgie (well, the last good one). He's released three superb memoir CDs — “My World,” “Freethinka,” and “Human Guitar”— as well as being one of the architects of Budgie's last album, “We're All Living in Cuckooland.”

And he's probably one of the nicest blokes you'll ever meet. (You can visit Simon at <http://simonleesguitar.com>)

He sat down with RadioRadio X for a chin wag:

RRX: Okay, let's start right at the beginning. Was there a singular event that made you want to be a musician?

SL: When I was ten years old, I saw an instrumental band called Sky on a daytime TV show. Sky became famous for their version of Bach's “Tocatta Fugue in D Minor.” I was really drawn towards the drummer, whose performance I thought was “kick-ass”! He made me want to play the drums! My parents were not so keen on that, so I ended up with a guitar.

RRX: How did you get your start in performing music? When did you start singing?

SL: I did my first live performance aged nine playing the recorder at a school concert. I figured out Art

Garfunkel's “Bright Eyes” — great melody! — and performed it solo for all the parents in the main hall. I was always good at figuring out tunes; I could hear them in my head on the guitar or keyboard. Sometimes it took a while, and I wouldn't always get them right first time. Back then, I had absolutely no desire to be a singer, but I was the primary songwriter in my second school band, Osprey, and we couldn't find anyone who could sing the songs properly. So I ended up doing it myself. Quite badly at first, too!

RRX: What was your first band (and what age)? Your first professional gig (how much did you get paid)?

SL: My first band was Warrior. Our music teacher would drag us out of whatever class we were in to perform for his music class! This was 1983 when I was thirteen. I remember an early Osprey gig where we sold tickets and came away with £150, our first reasonable pay check. We spent all of it on T-shirts, and they were the worst quality you can imagine. One wash and they shrank to crop-tops!

RRX: November, 1998 was a high-water mark for you. You released “My World,” your first solo CD, and you won the “Guitarist of the Year”

competition sponsored by Guitarist magazine, (you were previously a finalist in 1993, '94 & '95). Your song "Tribute" was on that CD. Is it true that "Tribute" was your homage to Ozzy Osbourne?

SL: Yes ... in a way. A friend lent me the cassette with "Blizzard of Ozz" on side A and "Diary of a Madman" on side B, I couldn't get past the first two songs. "I Don't Know" was electrifying for me. The bass notes at the start gob-smacked me! The vocal melody, the riff, the solo — it was all incredible. "Crazy Train" was great, too, but if I had to pick a favourite it would be "I Don't Know." It was literally months before I ventured past the tepid love song ("Goodbye to Romance") and heard "Suicide Solution," "Mr Crowley," etc.

"Tribute" came about after a conversation I had with glam rock star Jim Lea of Slade. Jim said Ozzy may be looking for a new guitarist and advised me to send a demo to Sharon Osbourne. I posted the instrumental version of "Tribute" to Sharon's accountant for him to pass on. It was very much in the Ozzy/Zakk Wylde style. When I created "My World," I thought I'd finish the job off and write some very tongue-in-cheek lyrics.

RRX: Can you recall the circumstances of your joining Budgie in February, 2003?

SL: The phone rang while I was giving a bass lesson; it was Paul Cox from Noteworthy Productions, and he said, "Budgie needs a guitarist." He was desperate for me to audition because they had some USA dates booked and guitarist Andy Hart had let them down. But I couldn't make the audition because I'd booked a short holiday to Oslo to see my brother. As soon as I returned, the phone rang, and Paul repeated, "We need a guitarist!" An audition was arranged, and I agreed to learn their stuff for it. Though I wasn't keen on the Budgie records I'd heard,

the audition material I was given was live recordings with Andy Hart on guitar. Andy is a seriously good guitarist, and I thought, "Right...this is my kind of stuff!" Andy's take on the guitar parts was something I could really get my teeth into, and more importantly, it's what Burke (Budgie singer/bassist Burke Shelley) wanted to hear. The audition went well, Burke and (drummer) Steve (Williams) were pretty welcoming and, after they'd had a short chat outside the rehearsal room, they offered me the job!

RRX: "We're All Living in Cuckooland" was Budgie's last studio album, which received mixed reviews. It was Budgie's first studio album in 24 years, and seemed geared toward the commercial market. Can you tell us about recording it? Were you pleased with the final production?

SL: Burke was very keen on creating a modern sounding album which showed that the band had progressed. I thought if we handled it right, it would be really cool. It is cool in a lot of ways, but it was equally disappointing for me. One of my criticisms of other Budgie albums — compared to those from metal bands I listened to — was that they sounded like half-baked demos. Cuckooland was no different, in the sense that my lead guitar parts were rough demo versions. I re-recorded most of them, but Burke insisted on using the rough versions because, as he put it, "they had more magic." They certainly had more mistakes! Steve was forced to use an electronic drum kit because the album was recorded in the basement of Burke's apartment in Cardiff, and he had to be considerate of his neighbours. Unfortunately Burke didn't possess the technical skills to make the electronic drums sound like real ones. Some elements of Cuckooland I do like. There are some great vocal production ideas and, as Burke has said many times, there is a section

Continued on Page 43...



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The Day Peckinpaugh

BY JOHN CALLAGHAN

The year was 1921, and Julius Barnes saw opportunity. The former United States Grain Commissioner saw the inherent potential in the new Barge Canal, the 524-mile network and third iteration of New York's iconic Erie Canal which was barely 3 years old. But in those years, the Canal had been under the care of the federal government as part of the war effort and the State of New York had just been able to wrest control back. Under federal control, specifically the railroad administration, the canal had languished. Mule-drawn canal era wooden canal boats still plied its waters, towed by steam tugs, not coming close to the greater carrying capacity that the new canal's depth and dimensions afforded. Even casual observers could conclude that the railroad administration, indifferent (at best) at the canal's prospects, had not made any effort to make full use of the nascent waterway. In fact, three years after the Barge Canal opened on May 15, 1918, nary a boat designed to travel the boat had been built.

Enter Mr. Barnes. As one long familiar with the Great Lakes grain trade, having entered the business at the age of 13 and made quite a fortune subsequently, and through his service during the Great War overseeing the Grain Corporation on behalf of the U.S. Government, he immediately appreciated the role the new canal could play in the shipping of goods - grain in particular - from the Midwest to the eastern seaboard. He also appreciated that no fleet purpose-built for the role existed - one would have to be built.

Enter Scottish-born Captain and ship designer Alexander McDougall and his McDougall-Duluth shipyard in Duluth, MN. An innovator in the design of low-slung, "whaleback" ships which plied the Great Lakes, McDougall was the perfect fit for an innovation of his own that Barnes had in

mind. He would build a fleet of so-called "lakers" - cargo ships with wheelhouses at the far forward in with other quarters all the way aft - and cargo holds in between. But this would be a short, squat version of the traditional laker...purpose built for the dimensions of the new Barge Canal. The lower profile would give this fleet an even more utilitarian aesthetic than the Great Lakes ships whose lines had at least modicum of maritime flair.

And so it was that in 1921, 5 hulls splashed down the ways of McDougall-Duluth shipyard. These were the ILI 101-105, for Interwaterways Lines Incorporated, as Barnes had named the new venture. More than 100 similar vessels would eventually ply the waters of New York's 20th century canal system but, for now, the ILI 101 was the star of the show. A contemporary description painted a "strictly business" picture of the new craft:

"At first glance this new craft presents a rather odd appearance, having no towering superstructure, but on examination her utility and efficiency are seen recognized. She is 254 feet overall, with a 36-foot beam and molded depth of 14 feet."

Finally, Canal officials received the word they had been waiting for. A telegram arriving in Albany on June 6, 2021 announced that the ILI 101 would enter the Barge Canal at Tonawanda (near Buffalo) the following day. The first of a new generation of canal boat had been born, and she was carrying 3,000 bushels of oats at a rate 60 percent below the railroad cost.

Renamed the Richard J. Barnes in 1922, she plied the waters of the Great Lakes, Barge Canal, and east coast under that name for another half century, including service during World War II during which it said a German submarine's torpedo passed harmlessly under her hull, the U-boat Captain having mistaken her for a cargo ship of much

deeper draft. In 1958, she was acquired by Erie Navigation and renamed Day Peckinpaugh, after a Great Lakes merchant of the same name who was the brother of the New York Yankees' player-manager, Roger Peckinpaugh.

By then, the Day Peckinpaugh - the first of her kind - had no shortage of company on New York's canals. Self propelled motorships resembling the ILI fleet were not only ubiquitous on the canal and contiguous waterways; they had grown larger as well. Now nearly 300 feet long and 44 feet wide, the behemoths filled the locks with only inches to spare. Cargo shipping on the Canal was at its peak.

By 1994, the first, was also last. Though liquid and dry cargo barges still utilized the Canal System, it was at a fraction of the volume seen in previous decades. And of all the self-propelled, ILI-style motorships which had been designed, built, and commissioned for the Barge Canal, only the Day Peckinpaugh remained. And as the 1994 navigation season drew to a close, so did nearly three-quarters of a century of commercial service. She was brought to a pier for mothballing - or a potential return to service - in Erie, PA. Forlorn, forgotten - but floating - she lay there for a decade until the deal was cut to send her to the scrap yard in 2005.

It was then that the New York State Museum got a call. The Day Peckinpaugh was, by then, after all, a significant piece of New York State history. Would the Museum like an artifact from the fabled ship? The wheel perhaps? Ship's horn? Another fitting artifact for display? The answer to the inquiry was an expedition to Erie, PA with representatives from the State Museum, Empire State Development Corporation, the Canal Corporation, the Canal Society of New York State, and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission. After

meeting with Erie Navigation officials and a comprehensive tour below decks they had their answer: we'll take the whole darn thing, thank you very much.

But before the giant motorship could be "accessioned" by the New York State Museum - becoming the largest artifact in its collection by far - there remained two fairly significant obstacles. First, the ship lay in Erie, PA - a Lake Erie voyage away from New York's waters. Second, there was the matter of a fee that the scrapper had already remitted to Erie, PA. Up stepped the very generous members of the Canal Society, who donated over \$30,000 without blinking an eye so the ship could be saved.

The Day Peckinpaugh would have a new chapter in her storied career, after all. Governor George Pataki announced that the ship would return to New York State, and - through a partnership between the New York State Museum, Canal Corporation, Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Erie Canalway, and the Canal Society - be transformed into a floating museum and classroom to help celebrate the rich history of New York's Canals and bring that history alive as she traveled from port to port along New York's inland waterways.

New York State Marine Highway's tugboat Benjamin Elliot - the 2000 Waterford Tugboat Roundup "Tug of the Year" - traveled to Erie, PA to take the Day Peckinpaugh in tow back to New York. Just before daybreak on July 12, 2005 she slipped lines to get underway, arriving near the site of Buffalo's Canalside and historic Erie Canal commercial slip about 15 hours later. The following day, she travelled to Lockport to prepare for a memorable journey to her new homeport in Waterford/ Cohoes.

Two months of preparation preceded the trip through the Canal. Finally,

the big day arrived, and she slipped her lines at the upper Lockport terminal. The Day Peckinpaugh was underway for the first time in a decade. At the wheel was Capt. John Callaghan, on loan from the NYS Canal Corporation, and in the engine room was Chief Engineer Jim Brennan, a veteran of the ship's commercial days, who'd brought the ship back to life over the last two months.

The 330-mile trip to Waterford was successful with the Day Peckinpaugh under tow for much of it for safety reasons and locking through locks under her own power. The next few years saw slow, but steady, progress in rehabilitating the ship. In 2009, a much bigger trip, and more prominent celebration, awaited. 2009 marked the 400th anniversary of the discoveries of Hudson and de Champlain, and the 200th anniversary of successful steam navigation on the Hudson River. The Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial linked all of these significant developments - but how best to tie them all together?

Enter the Day Peckinpaugh. In 2009, with federal funding secured by Congressman Paul Tonko, she traveled from Waterford north to Lake Champlain - calling on the ports of Plattsburgh, Crown Point, Burlington and Whithall - and south to New York Harbor - with her main hold converted to exhibit space. Much of the trip she was joined by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum's authentic replica canal boat Lois McClure, the Canal Corporation's 1928 tugboat Governor Cleveland, the Canal Corporation's flagship and teaching tugboat URGER - the 2001 Waterford Tugboat Roundup "Tug of the Year" - and the venerable 8th Sea - the 200_ Waterford Tugboat Roundup "Tug of the Year." Thousands of people who came aboard the Day Peckinpaugh that year learned not just about the voyages of discovery in 1609, and Fulton's 1807 innovation, but also the rich history of New York's Canal System and the pivotal role the Day Peckinpaugh had played in it.

As a second act, the Day

Peckinpaugh did not disappoint. The 2009 voyage also served as proof of concept. The very vision of a floating museum and classroom announced by Governor Pataki in 2005 had become a reality. The longest serving canal boat in New York State history was serving

again - albeit in a different way. Long gone were the oats, grain, cement, and coal shipments, but the storied ship still carried a cargo. Plying New York's waters once more, she carried history, imagination, and hope instead. One hundred years ago the

Day Peckinpaugh represented a quantum leap forward in maritime innovation, today she endures as an important link to our past, and a reminder of what's possible when the right people and resources come together for a common goal.





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Ric Orlando (Cntd.)

Continued from Page 23.

garage covers, and a handful of my originals. And Andy played bass; I played guitar, and two other members. And for about a year, we played around Albany a little bit... it was fun. We weren't going anywhere, more just like guys getting together, playing music they grew up with, and we had fun. So Andy and I were good friends. He came over with my wife, and his wife, Carla, great friends, she's a great photographer.

COVID hit, Andy called me, said, "You want to sing a song?" I said "What song?" He told me he was digging through his lost recordings, right, so he had recorded the rhythm tracks to 'Born Hungry' I think he said down in Memphis or Nashville, maybe seven or eight years ago. And he sent me the rhythm tracks, and the lyrics, "Give them a crack," he said, "I think you'd be perfect for them. You're the chef. It's Born Hungry," and he laughed. So I looked at it, started tweaking the lyrics a little bit, made it kind of fit better, my personality, banged out a rough demo, he loved it. A little later in COVID, we went into a studio where we were socially distanced and sang it. He got some great musicians to play harmonica, piano, guitar, and everything was done remotely. We recorded the song. Great. It's one song, called Born Hungry.

About three weeks ago, he said "Hey, what are you doing Friday? I'm going to make a video, and his friend Jeffry, French guy, great videographer, came up from New York, and I knocked out a bunch of fun, foodie places, Catskill Mountain Pizza, Top Taste Jamaican, Pippy Hot Dog Truck, Eng's Chinese, just fun different places. We shot the video, and now, it's doing great. It actually just got picked up by Outlaw Country on Sirius – Andy and I both laughed because we never thought we'd ever be on a country station. And it's getting reviews, and it's doing quite well. As far as my music career goes, right now, we did the one. We ended up naming the band the Huckleberries, I don't know why, but we did. Sirius said we needed a name. Our plans are, as we go forward, to try to do one or two songs a year. Just for fun, and just for amusement, and also, as a way to re-purpose music he and I had recorded over our careers. We're going to keep a food theme for all the songs. Meanwhile, Andy is doing some new stuff with The Dictators, so for the next few months, he's pretty tied up. So maybe the end of this year, beginning of the next.

Simon Lees (Cntd.)

Continued from Page 36

halfway through the title track's solo where the backing vocals come in and really give a magical lift to the song. Real "hairs standing on the back of your neck" stuff.

RRX: "Cuckooland" was taken from Aristophanes' play, "The Birds," which is described by Wikipedia as "a perfectly realized fantasy remarkable for its mimicry of birds and for the gaiety of its songs." Have you read it?

SL: No. The title for the album and the title track were 100% Burke's idea. I thought Steve had a great alternative for the album title: "Ears Pierced While You Wait."

RRX: You left Budgie in July, 2007, and the reasons given were so you could pursue a solo career and focus on teaching guitar. But there have been rumors that there was a clash between you and Burke Shelley. True? Are you and Burke still on good terms?

SL: Ha, ha — yeah, I should've been more honest at the time. I made two lists — pros and cons — of being in Budgie. The pros were things like "being in a famous band" and "playing bigger gigs," albeit occasionally. The cons side took up several large sheets of paper. The final straw was when Anubis began as a side project and Burke demanded that we stop promoting Anubis on MySpace. I explained to him it

was only a side-project; he called me a liar. History has proved I wasn't! He also wasn't keen on my One Man Rock Show, but that was my actual job, along with teaching guitar and bass! Budgie never paid me a wage. I got paid for the gigs, and that money only replaced what I lost cancelling One Man Rock Shows and lessons! Very occasionally we did a show outside the UK which paid more, but in my four years with Budgie, we averaged only five of those per year. And Burke was becoming less and less professional. Not setting his amp up properly so we'd have to restart most gigs. He'd break strings and run off stage to replace them, leaving Steve and me standing on stage looking and feeling awkward. And there were other stresses, too. I don't speak to Burke or Steve on a regular basis, although I did have a really nice chat with Steve a few months back. I don't hate Burke; far from it; I always got on with him ... well, on a personal level. He is a nice guy; very entertaining ... and funny too! He taught me a lot about the importance of playing "tight," and I've since used songwriting tools that I witnessed him using. Being in Budgie definitely made me a better musician.



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Todd Nelson: No Stranger

A life of travel and a life of bands, more that can be mentioned for former Fear of Strangers guitarist Todd Nelson.



Todd Nelson. Photo provided

forays into songwriting were with Jim Fish. Country Rock was basically what's called Americana today. I try not to get hung up on genre splitting, because I think that's about marketing music, not the music itself. But one of the bands I play with now is Marc Delgado's group. His music could probably be called Americana so my Country and Country Rock experience is right at home. His album is called "Wildwood Road" and has just become available for streaming. He's one of the best lyricists I've ever worked with; right up there with Val Haynes and Steve Cohen of Fear of Strangers. I played guitar on several of the songs.

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Todd Nelson is a veteran guitarist with enough experience and versatility to beat the band. A foundational member is some bands, and a sessions player in others, Todd always brings it.

We sit down with Todd and talk old times.

RRX: One of the early bands you were a part of when you first arrived in the Capital Region was called "Noonward Race," inspired by a song of the same name by Mahavishnu Orchestra. We were fortunate to have drummer Billy Cobham in a previous issue. What's so inspiring about that band, in your opinion?

TN: Wow! You're really reaching back. Noonward Race was a high school band in the early 70's. We actually played one of the Mahavishnu Orchestra songs called Dance of Maya from the same album. John McLaughlin was a real inspiration for me at that time, and his band was very exciting in concert. I think the compositions have had the longest lasting effect on me. It was an instrumental band playing what was then called Fusion. My musical partnership, NEQ plays instrumental music, much of which I have written. We're a hybrid of various rock genres and we're almost finished with a recording of new songs I've written

and the three of us have arranged and produced. Kyle Esposito is the bassist and Manuel Quintana is the drummer/engineer. They are both highly sought after musicians from the Hudson Valley. My personal goal is to bring back the instrumental rock hit...really.

RRX: Still going back, you played with Country Joe Higgins and the Playboys, where your career really started, and from that to Silver Chicken, headed by Jim Fish, both country rock. How did your time in country rock shape the music you'd eventually develop?

TN: I did my very first recording with Joe Higgins at 19. And my first

RRX: Many people that have been in the area for a while might know you as the guitar player for The Units, with drummer Al Kash, singer Val Haynes, and bassist Steve Cohen. The band started with covers, but had a transition from covers to originals that involved the band Little Feat. Can you explain?

TN: Little Feat was doing an in store appearance at Just-A-Song, the record store. Lowell George wasn't there but we talked with the other guys quite a bit. I remember Paul Barrere told us if we wanted to get anywhere, original songs were essential. So we started writing songs; together at first and then separately. We just dove into

it. This was around '78 or '79. And then the 80's music scene exploded with all kinds of new bands. There was an anything goes kind of vibe happening in songwriting at that time that made it less intimidating to write and play your own material.

RRX: The Units opened up for a lot of great bands in the early eighties, like The Police, B-52s, and REM, and more that space wouldn't allow. What was going on in the live music scene back then? How would you compare, and maybe contrast it to now?

TN: I don't want to seem like someone who says the old days were so much better. There are some good venues open now, and people still want to support live music. But it did seem more focused then. You booked a gig, put up some posters and word of mouth took care of bringing people to the show. Now it's a more diffuse dynamic with social media. These changes have affected much more than the local music scene as I'm sure you are aware.

RRX: The Units was eventually re-named Fear of Strangers, and you put out an album, Faulty Products. Now, I'm assuming at that time, you had a lot of fans that really knew you for the covers you did, and experienced The Units/Fear of Strangers as a way to let loose on a weekend; were these people receptive to the album and the original stuff?

TN: The album was released long after we had started playing original

music for our local audience. So by that time they had heard most or all of the songs, because that was how we developed them. Not in the studio, because it was too expensive then. So whatever adjustment there was had already taken place. The reception to the album regionally was overwhelming. When we ventured out of the Capital District it was much harder to attract an audience, except at CBGB in NYC where we had a following. Faulty Products, the record company, didn't invest much in promotion. We were on our own.

RRX: I thought it was interesting, as an end-cap here, that you did some originals with NRBQ producing, and with Dan McCarroll, now president of Warner Bros Records on drums. What is the story there? Was Dan McCarroll on his way to working in Warner Bros.? And how did you connect with NRBQ?

TN: I recorded three original songs with Terry Adams of NRBQ producing. I was introduced by Dan McCarroll who was friendly with him but I don't remember how. I owe Dan one for that. Dan's gregarious nature has served him well. Last I heard he had left Warner Bros and is the head of Amazon Music. But that could be old info. The music was eventually released on cassette by the band, Tornado Bait.



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Observations and Rabblings from a Cranky Old Guy

BY JEFF SPAULDING

As I write this, it's hitting September, the month where we celebrate the 55th year of Jim Barrett being on the radio.

And not just because of that long of a career, but that his talents have been heard on various radio stations in the Capital Region over the decades.

As I mentioned a couple of issues ago, my introduction to Jim began at WRPI in Troy in the early 1970's.

A fellow Shaker High School grad, Ken Haverly, had an air shift at the time on WRPI.

I may be wrong, but he may have stolen the name "Captain Pissgums" for his on-air identity.

I sat in watching Ken do his thing, however, that was actually my second time, in a real live radio station.

The first was at 1540 WPTR, when we used to stop by and bug the disc jockey with questions about what he does.

Through Ken, I met Jim and his cohorts.

Art Fredette may have been there too, there WAS a guy in handcuffs strapped down by duct tape, he may have been foaming at the mouth as well.

That introduction leads to more of "my beginning."

Since I truly discovered radio on a college radio station, my tale starts here.

As mentioned, I'm a 1974 graduate of Shaker, and heading into spring '73 I still had no idea what I wanted to do when I grew up.

That's when I connected to the theatre, my first show as a member of the

Jets in "West Side Story"

After the run of the show, I met with my Guidance Counselor Ed Gee, and my mom Marie, proclaiming

"I WANT TO BE AN ACTOR!"

Both looked at each other in fear.

Mr. Gee gave me the "staving actors" line, and the "most actors are waiters" one too, followed by "Mike, it's only your first show, you may not be very good.

Then he said. Hey, what about a more solid career, with a great future, and you can be as creative as you want to be. More than that, you'll make money hand over fist.

How about radio?

My thoughts raced to local heroes like Boom Boom Brannigan, Jerry Tyler, The Wild Child, and so many others.

As a disc jockey, you got free EVERYTHING!

As a disc jockey you got FREE WOMEN.

So as a very horny 17-year-old I said SIGN ME UP!

Mister Gee suggested Ashland College in Ohio.

I didn't know anything about Ohio. It was the first school I applied for and the first that accepted me.

My mother, dear darling woman she is, told me to take it, she wanted by ass out of the house and didn't want to risk potential rejection

At the time my mother didn't drive, and the old man had been dead for about four years.

With luck, we found another graduate whose family was taking her, we hitched a ride.

I think it took us one day.

The problem was, my fellow grad had BIG braces, and spit, a LOT.

Guess who sat next to her for over 500 miles?

Little Ole Mask Wearer me.

We got to Ashland early in the evening. Got a hotel and prepared to hit the campus in the morning. That evening, I learned some things about Ashland.

At the time, even though I was 18, the only beer I would drink was something called "near beer," with half the usual alcohol.

Between 18 and 21, that's all you

could legally drink.

There was also wine and spirits with the same alcohol content.

You could buy all the real stuff in what they called a "state store"

I didn't care, I was a COLLEGE BOY!

Besides, I can bribe seniors.

And weed is just as powerful no matter how young or old you are.

I have SO much more to tell you, I'm saving it for the next edition.

It's a wonder I graduated when I did, let alone I'm still alive today.

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Every Thorn has its Rose

BY VEGAS NACY

It was the winter of 1989. Poison and Tesla were in town and I also heard they were staying close to me. As a fan of all genres of music I decided to head out to try and meet the bands as I did many many times before. I got to the hotel and almost immediately I met the guys in Tesla. Great guys and a great band.

I stuck around for a while and Brett Michaels came out of the hotel bar dressed in full ski gear. He signed something for me, we chatted then he headed back into the bar.

As I was leaving he came back out and stated that one of the crew was drinking, stole the bus and hasn't been back for hours. "I need to get out of

these winter clothes and all of my clothes are still on the bus". He then asked if there was anywhere to get clothes. This was Saratoga in the late 80's, There was only Pyramid Mall and it was going to close soon.

I told him I could take him there. He grabbed his security dude and a briefcase and off we went. As soon as we got in the mall he was recognized. He told me this was a bad idea as he grabbed a pair of jeans from the Jean Hut.

By then it was too late. We ran into a shoe store and were bombarded. Mall security called the police in and it quickly turned into a meet and greet. Police had lines formed with rules in

place. Brett leaned in and whispered to me "Just sign everything they must think you are Rickie". Rickie is the drummer for Poison. We got about 1,000 roses, signed a ton of stuff and the funny thing is I signed everything with my signature. We got done and the police asked how we were getting out. "My car is in the parking lot," I said. "Ok we can get you to the parking lot but then we can't control the crowd".

We got to the doors, took a breath and ran for it. Ironically my locks were frozen shut. In a panic Brett asked this older lady if she could take them to the hotel.

He said "my briefcase is in the back-seat and has very important papers in

there, please come to the hotel as soon as you can.

I called AAA and everyone soon realized I was not in the band and left me there with my frozen locks. I got them to unfreeze and headed to the hotel, having the front desk call up to his room.

He came down and hugged me. He said "you could have just stolen my briefcase and I would have never been able to find you". I said "I'm not that kinda guy" We went out to dinner and for a while he would leave me tickets whenever nearby. That's my one night in Poison story,

Thanks for listening!



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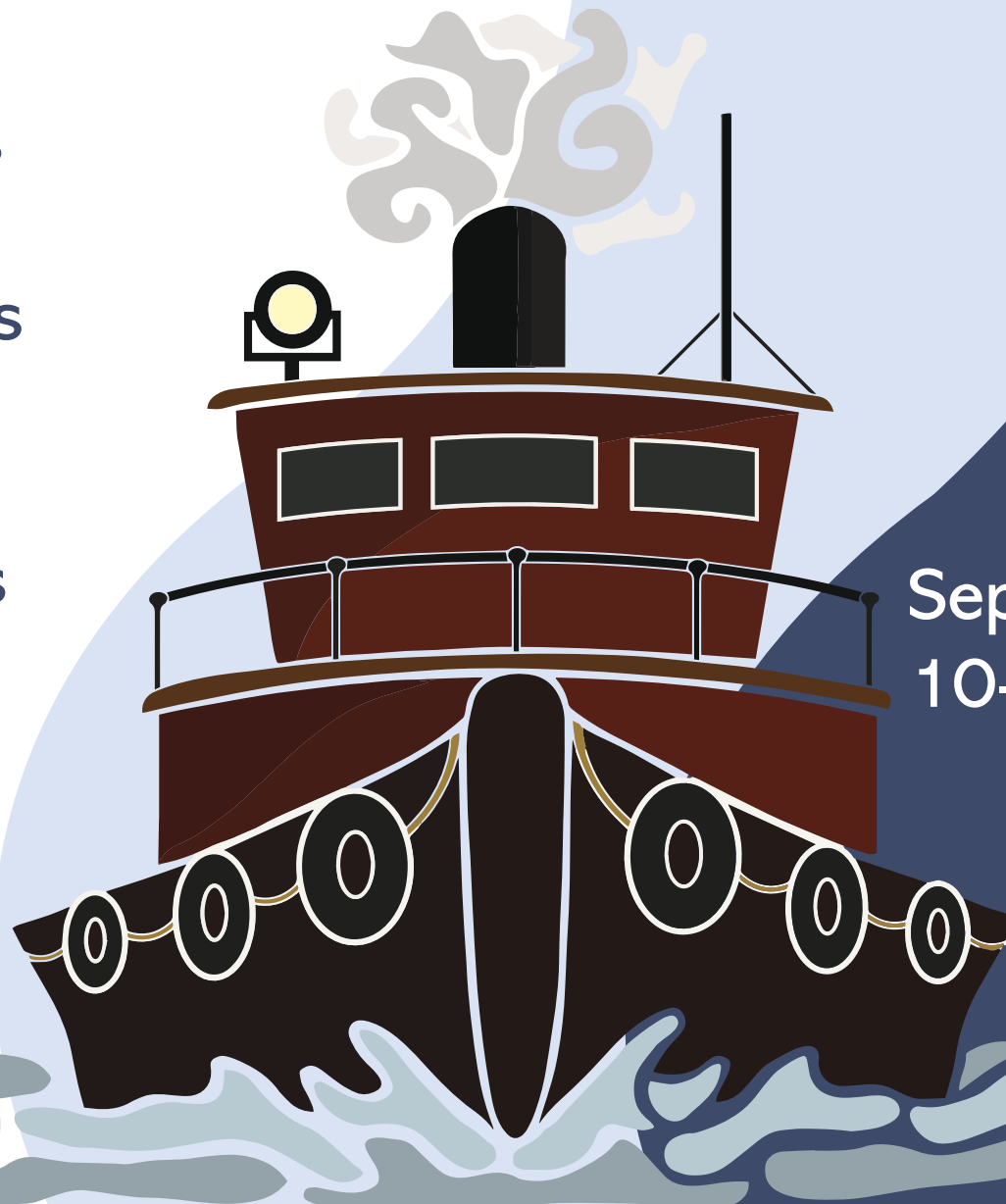
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