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July 2022  
Vol. 4, Issue 7

## LIL' BABY SUPLEX

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# Lil' Baby Suplex

*Rap is reality, and rapper Lil' Baby Suplex holds the key to the real.*

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Lil' Baby Suplex.  
Photo provided.

Music soothes us, and when we're having a lousy day, it can be our sole source of healing. But it can also be a steam vent. It is always an outlet for the performer, and sometimes it's the only way we have of understanding the pain of someone we can't see eye-to-eye with. And we get what we seek from music.

Lil' Baby Suplex speaks his truth with flow and meter. He doesn't make his sound to order, and he may not be out purely to entertain the masses. He has something to say and his voice adds to the choir of people that make up the grand orchestra that is Albany.

**RRX:** When I start interviews, I do as much research as I can. Cool part of that is it mostly just means rocking out to people's jams. I'm rocking out to 'Drinking,' right now. You don't hold back, I mean not at all. Okay, so yeah, you hold back just enough to keep it creative. It's good to let it all out. But is

it a double-edged sword, do you think?

**LBS:** I always try to be as authentic as I can in my music, I feel like people can tell when you're trying to bullshit them. It's definitely tricky because you want your music to be real as possible but at the same time you don't wanna expose too much ya know you wanna leave certain things for your fans to find out as they keep f\*\*\*g with you and growing with you.

**RRX:** I love 'Lil' Baby Suplex.' That's a cool-ass name for a rapper, because you never expect a wrestling reference. It's like the RZA being hooked on old school kung fu movies, and suddenly you got Wu-Tang. So, was it from a love of wrestling? What made you decide on 'Little Baby Suplex?'

**LBS:** It definitely came from wrestling. I'm not sure what it was but I've always had a love for wrestling as long as I can remember and I try to keep that in my music whether it's

references or just the persona I put on when I'm outside. I'm pretty sure one of the homies called me Suplex randomly and it just fit too well not to use it.

**RRX:** As I listen, there's talk about drugs, especially things like Percocet, opioids. And you're not talking any stance on it; it's just in the music. In some cases, you're talking about the burden of it, and sometimes it's just a reference to our general culture. So, I'll ask what you think about the role drugs have in music, and in life?

**LBS:** Drugs are a tough topic because I feel like they've had a big part in music as a whole but they've also been a lot of musicians' downfall so it's a very fine line. I feel like it's the same in life you could do drugs and have a sick time or you can do them and they'll ruin your life you gotta be smart and know what's best for you. I don't

*Continued on Page 5...*





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Lil' Baby Suplex.  
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try to pick a side on it and I'm not trying to teach anyone a lesson. All I can do is be honest about how they've affected me and my life good or bad. People just need to be smart about what they put into their bodies.

**RRX:** I have always had a general rule in my writing; don't write about my life but come as close to it as possible. I say that because as much good as there is to doing it, there's the potential for it to blow up in your face. It's like people know you through your work until they know you too well. With your music, how much of your real life do you allow in?

**LBS:** That's back to the authenticity I try to bring to my music I really don't hold anything back when it comes to subject matter I'll talk about anything and if people wanna judge it or get offended so be it. I feel like when you're your true self in your music then people will get that and when they meet you in person it'll make even more sense you can't create a real connection with the listener if you're not talking about stuff they been through or they deal with day to day or even just what they wanna hear that's how you create real fans you gotta be real and appeal to your market

**RRX:** You have a following, a good scene in Albany. I heard, and correct me if I'm wrong, that you have a lot of friends in the skater scene around Empire State Plaza. And it's cool for me to ask people about the scenes they're in, because I'm always finding overlaps. What would you say about the people in your scene that sets them apart?

**LBS:** Well, I like to be around people who can blend with any group so I would say my homies are a part of a whole bunch of different scenes and we can really make any scene our own. that's what we're bringing to the game and that's what we're doing everywhere we go and people reciprocate that ener-

gy every time.

**RRX:** As I said in one of the previous questions, you don't hold back. You rap about drugs, you rap about guns, and it's a part of life, it is what it is. But there are a lot of people who hear rap and hip hop and think it's a bad influence on people. Never mind that metal lyrics can be just as bad in different ways. What's good about the bad?

**LBS:** People say that because they don't have to deal with it in their everyday life and they're scared of it cause they don't want it to effect their little bubble. Where I'm from we face that stuff head on and I feel like rap music in particular was always kind of similar to the news you hear what's going on it different cities around the world you hear the new slang and you're seeing the latest clothes in the videos so I feel like talking about the reality of what's going on outside is the least I can do. Otherwise, people who know me in real life would know it's fake. I feel like when you're doing anything artistic your environment plays a big part in how it comes out so you gotta let people know.

**RRX:** This is where you answer the question I didn't ask. Remarks? Comments? Educate, enlighten, emote – the floor is yours.

**LBS:** Final Remarks: I really appreciate you guys for giving me this opportunity and showing me love on your platform. The questions you asked were sick I can tell you really care about what you do that made me more excited than I already was. I just want everyone seeing this to know I'm in a great space and I'm ready to make everyone who believed in me the last few years to know it's our time but I'll keep it short and sweet. BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR coming soon. The most handsome rapper is back. Be ready or be quiet.

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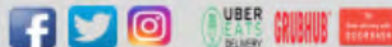
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Odds are, if you aren't a New York native, you've probably never heard of Troy. Even if you are, there's a chance you may not have. But, if you're anything like me (who'd never been to the East Coast at all until three years ago), when you first thought of New York, what you imagined was N.Y.C. -- the razzle, the dazzle, the glitz and the glamour. You imagined those cheesy rom-com moments that we all hate to admit that we kinda, sorta, really (really) love.

You know -- the dancing in the pouring rain with some random heart-throb in the middle of Times Square (who, come morning time, will not be the 10/10 you remembered) as a cat-sized rat scurries between your feet diving headfirst into an overflowing, godforsaken, downright dirty pile of sidewalk trash and a pissed off, over-worked, underpaid taxi driver lays heavy on his horn screaming at you, the rat, and the 4/10 to get the hell out

of his way -- type of moment.

A wholesome moment. A romantic moment. A moment you surely won't forget, despite your best efforts.

I digress.

Needless to say, New York is all that (unfortunately), but it's also so much more.

When I moved here three years ago, I was floored (and so, so, so) pleasantly surprised to discover that New York was way more than what you see in the movies. Don't get me wrong, N.Y.C. is great and all, but Upstate is a whole different vibe, in the very best way possible.

At this point, I suppose I should introduce myself. For those of you who don't recognize the by-line, hiya! I'm Jordan. If you're a frequenter of Troy's bar scene, or an industry worker yourself, you may know me as the bartender from Footsy Magoo's, but for those of you who don't, here's a little about me:

I'm 25 and I've been all over the

United States (48/50). I've been to Japan (and dove with whale sharks). I've backpacked alone through Europe (London, Paris, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Munich, Venice, Croatia, Rome). I'm, as they say, a military brat (both parents -- Army). And, as a brat (proudly), the urge to pick up and move after two or three years in one place is practically engrained in my DNA.

But for the first time in perhaps ever, that innate urge has yet to rear its head. Something about the little ol', blip-on-the-radar, quirky city of Troy has somehow managed to capture my heart and hold my interest. And that is for many reasons.

For starters, it has good food (like... really good food). It has history (like... a lot.) It has brownstones (with vines and moss crawling all over.) It has stoops for days (stoop-kid for life.) It has picturesque parks (and hidden gems you'd never believe.)

But, above all else, it has the best

(and weirdest) people around.

Whether it's the fourth street sidewalk-swindlers relentlessly asking for a cent or a cig every other second, or the newest bunch of small business owners opening seemingly every other day, or the industry workers and regulars servin', boppin', and supportin' all around town -- the Collar City characters are what make Collar City what it is.

Of perhaps all the places I have lived, Troy just may be one of my favorites. Call me crazy (because I probably am), but there's a certain energy and magic to this little ol', blip-on-the-radar, quirky city of Troy that is uniquely special.

And the raddest part about it? The best has yet to come.

Stay tuned.

Xx,  
Jordan

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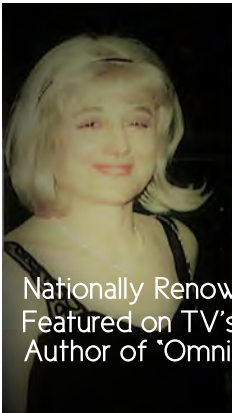
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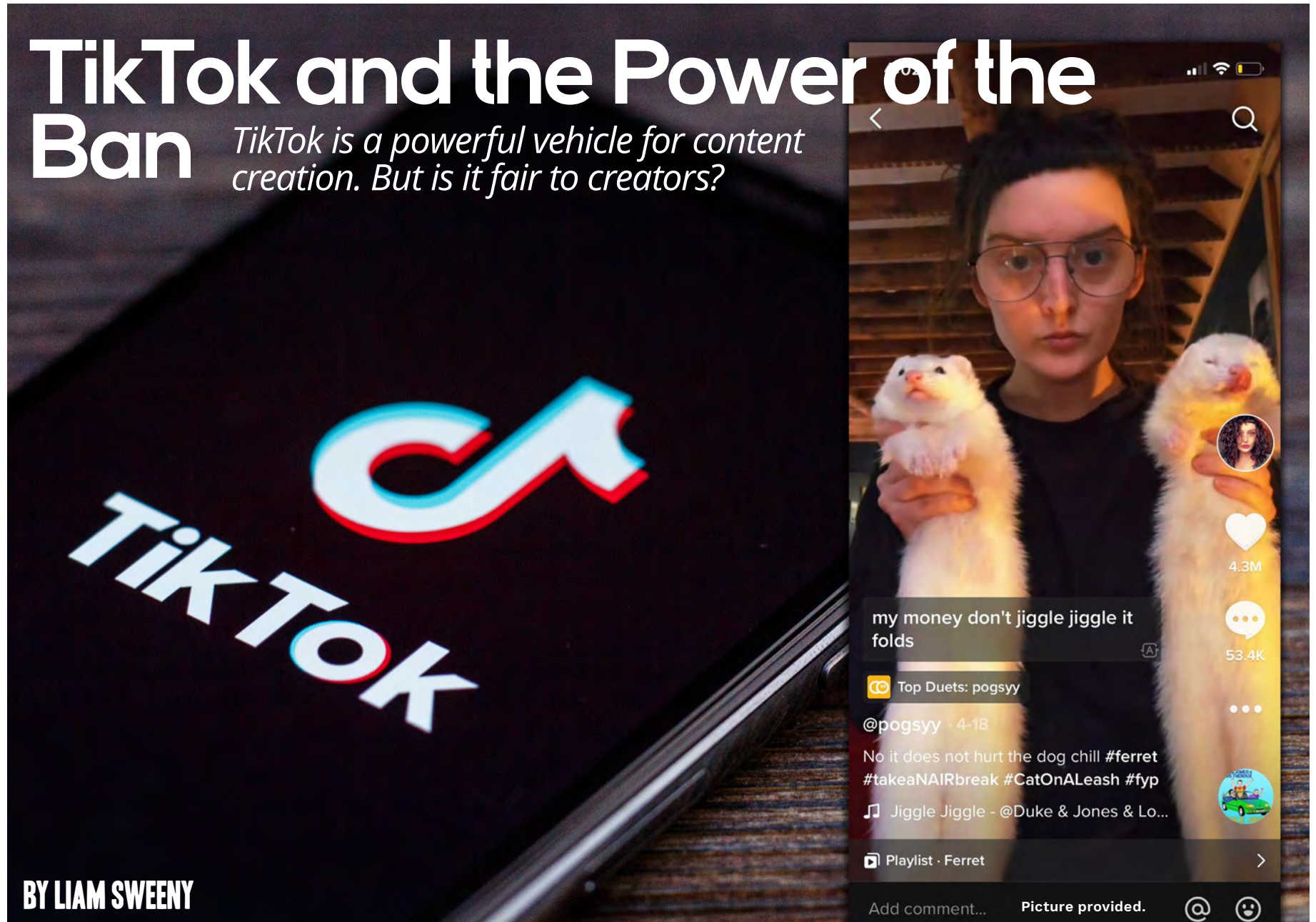
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# TikTok and the Power of the Ban

*TikTok is a powerful vehicle for content creation. But is it fair to creators?*

BY LIAM SWEENY



Tara Rule has snowy white magic ferrets, slinky heart capturers that she uses to mesmerize her crowd on TikTok. She and her magic ferrets perform to an iPhone and if they're lucky, their adoring fans provide them with little satchels of coin, which TikTok holds for safe keeping.

Then one day, the lights went out as Tara found herself on the wrong end of a permanent ban.

TikTok, with close to one billion monthly users and three billion app

downloads, is well on its way to being the victor of the battle for social media dominance in the 21st century. But with a content moderation system drive almost exclusively by AI, it is also in a different battle, in the Mexican standoff of art, cyberbullying, and automation.

TikTok was launched in 2017 as a platform that allows for the creation and sharing of short videos, anything from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. It has had a meteoric rise, penetrating one

third of the social media market in one-third the time of Facebook and Instagram. And it is a definite favorite of a younger generation of users.

On one side of the battle are artists, musicians, performers, and other creative folk, who find in sites like TikTok a way to support themselves by making what people want to see and hoping something goes viral that they can capitalize on. TikTok provides them a platform, and a way to make money off their content, holding said money in

TikTok's own system, with additional incentives in a "Content Creator's Fund." On another side of the battle is, surprisingly, not TikTok, but rather, its almost exclusive reliance on AI to moderate user content, including creators' content.

Tara Rule, in person, is a bubbly, excited, and enthusiastic person, a filmmaker and actress. And her ferrets have doctorates in applied physics and economics from the University of Connecticut. Her videos, ferrets and no

ferrets, are playful yet earnest, her passion and drive on her sleeve. In no way does she tread the line of public decency but faced the darkness for one error and one error only; one of her posts went viral.

When a post goes viral, it's the break every content creator looks for. It's the lottery. It's where actual money starts coming in. And TikTok, through its monetizing tools, can efficiently keep track of this money. Most content creators simply leave it in TikTok's accounts. Tara did. So, when content gets banned, and with it, the accounts themselves, content creators get locked out of everything, including their earnings.

One of Tara Rule's videos went viral. And with all the joy and the praise and the accolades came just a little bit of hate.

"I only started making content on TikTok a few months ago," says Tara. "I was slowly gaining a small following, with a few videos going somewhat viral here and there, (2-3 million interactions). I recently made a dance video with my ferrets that exploded overnight with 30 million interactions. I was gaining tens of thousands of followers per minute. The video has gone viral on all social media platforms and has been featured on several shows about animals and viral videos. Just like with any social media platform, becoming an overnight viral sensation is asking for bullies to come out of the woodwork."

She got hit, and she got hit hard. Not by people she knew; well, there's actually no way to tell. And there's no way to tell how many users reported her, who reported her, how many of them were real accounts, or what about her content was report worthy. It may be that TikTok's AI sees a quantity of reports and bans the user without any human inspection. Tara believes this may have been the case with her.

"Oftentimes, like in my experience,"

Rule says, "one or two people will make a few fake accounts, report a creator's account using fake accounts, and just like that they have successfully taken someone down in a pretty cowardice way if you ask me. They get what they want, which is to inconvenience someone for a few minutes, without having to face any potential repercussions themselves."

This article could be solely about cyberbullying. The reason it's not is because what we call 'content' used to be called 'art,' or 'creative expression,' and that will draw criticism. For any social media platform to generate artistic expression, it must moderate that expression in the way that it is being perceived – through human eyes. AI will never be able to understand or appreciate art, no matter how many Picassos it can fabricate.

Rule did try to contact TikTok to inquire into the banning, but it was a brick wall. This journalist reached out to TikTok and has not received an answer as of this writing. This is not unique to TikTok, and to a degree, it's understandable. With a billion active users, it would be very difficult to respond to the needs of even a fraction of them. This is why it's doubly important that the moderation of content, especially reported content, be flagged for human inspection before being banned. That is the challenge for TikTok, and for other social media platforms in the 21st century.

Tara Rule's account was reinstated, possibly due to a flood of media inquiries. It would be the hope that Tara had learned a hard lesson on how not to be banned, but sadly, her ferrets cannot get any cuter; they are already too cute. Yet she stands at the ready for the next viral video, the next wave of bullies. And she'll likely not keep much of her earnings in the TikTok kitty.





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# My New Best Friend, Carsie Blanton



Carsie Blanton.  
Photo provided.

BY NIKI KAOS

I confess I had not yet heard about the most delightfully talented and genuine Carsie Blanton and her Handsome Band until her brilliant Facebook campaign hit my computer. (Yes, I'm FB old in social media years) I was intrigued by her live video performances and her promise of solidarity and swearing! I reached out to some of my best friends and said – let's go!!

WAMC Linda is truly a unique concert experience, with a live recording studio inside a historic, repurposed bank. The hospitality is spot on, and everyone is seated concert style. The stage was adorned with a pink neon light sign "Carsie Blanton" and instruments set up and ready to go. There was no opening act, and starting on time, Carsie and

her Handsome Band hit the stage.

Carsie has more than a few songs to pull from and highlights her 2021 release "Love and Rage" and her 2022 album, "Body of Work", which is currently only available in CD format at her live shows. (I got a copy, and it is fantastic!)

Currently based in Philly, Carsie is originally from the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia and her southern hospitality shines through with how she engages the audience. Completely at ease on stage, these road tour veterans are clearly family. Joe Plowman on bass and Patrick Firth on keyboards complete the trio. The group performs effortlessly, or so it seems, and you are immediately drawn into the storytelling of her lyrics and her beautiful vocals.

Every song performed featured the beautiful harmonies and musicianship of the Handsome Band and Carsie's stunning guitarwork. I barely noticed she was playing guitar until halfway through the set. (Kidding! I was watching closely to check out those amazing chord progressions!) Her guitar technique was fluid and perfectly matched with the cozy indie-alt-Americana vibe of her songs. But mostly I was distracted by the earthy beauty of her voice and her smart, sassy lyrics. The arrangements provided seamless support with this finely tuned trio. A delightful surprise given I hadn't heard much of her music prior to the show.

"Be Good" and "American Kid" telegraph her wry lyrical style, reminding

me of one of her musical inspirations, John Prine. I felt relaxed and charmed the whole night. Completely captivated. She's truly a natural and I've fallen in love. Toward the end of the evening, I got my chance for audience participation, so I chimed in with "That ain't the way we do it no more" (lyric from the song "Shit List") when called upon. A rowdy stomper of a song!

I highly recommend checking out Carsie's website and Patreon, where you can access her songs and other exclusive content. If you get a chance to catch this one in concert – you should make every effort. She's a true musical knock out in the best way possible!

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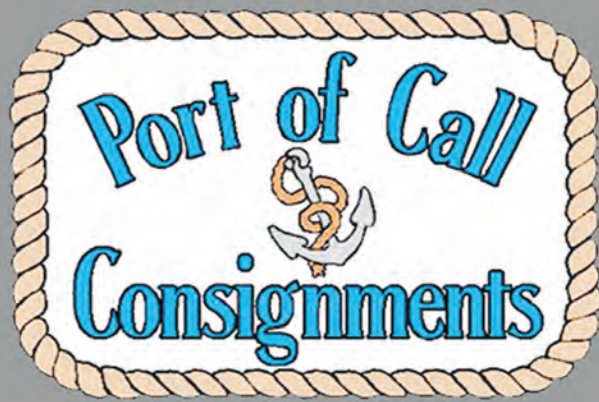
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# Getting Real with Reggy Steel

*The impulse to rap takes time and experience, and just a little bit of love and faith*

BY NIKI KAOS

Reggie Steel. Photo provided.

I met Reggie Steel at the popular Rustic Barn open mic, and he caught my attention immediately with his confidence - a true artist. High-quality lyrics over well produced tracks, the heart of the crowd was captured, and everyone was grooving. Since I'm not afraid of talking to strangers, I caught him out on the back deck where the overflow crowd was socializing, and we became fast friends. I learned about his new album and his experience with rap, and I couldn't resist learning more about what he's up to.

**RRX:** As soon as I saw you perform at the Rustic Barn, I could tell you are in a great place with your music. You have a ton of songs on social media,

and your new album "Return of the Servant" was just released May 2022. The eponymous first track is about returning to your faith. What brought you there? And why did you decide to lead with that message on your album?

**RS:** For me, I grew up in church. My parents put that foundation in me, and so it's a big part of who I am. God has always been a big part of my life. With me being older, and having kids and doing my music, I think it's important to share my faith.

You know, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. We all have our issues. But at the end of the day, I always believe we can trust in the Lord to

get us through, whatever we're going through. And sometimes we forget that. Sometimes I forget that. So, me returning back to God, it's not so much that I ever left. It's just that dealing with work, having kids, doing music, sometimes you get so caught up with other things you forget to say that prayer. So basically, "Return of the Servant" is giving my attention back to God.

**RRX:** I'm always interested when I run into people I haven't met before in the local music scene. How long have you been here, and what has it been like for you?

**RS:** I'm from Virginia, born and raised. And I work for a naval shipyard

out of Newport News, VA and sometimes the government will send a lot of the workers to other areas to help with other naval facilities. But my main hub is back in VA. But I've been here in NY working for a while out of this naval site. So that's part of my job. Sometimes I have to go to other naval yards to help out.

It's a blessing, because I've been doing music for a long time. And I've performed at a lot of events in Virginia, but it's good to get out of your hometown. Because there is only so much you can do on the internet. But sometimes people need that face-to-face interaction. That goes a long way too. People need to see you in public. So

being out here for work, I'm taking advantage of the situation, because people of New York can learn about Reggy Steel and learn about who I am.

**RRX:** I asked you a lot of questions about how to write a good rap song, and it sounds like one basic step is learning how to write and rhyme over beats. But you talk about storytelling as essential for producing a captivating song. Once you mentioned that, I noticed the importance of that part of the creative process. This crosses over multiple genres. On a previous release, your song "Soul Mate" tells a romantic story. How do you think storytelling helps people connect with your music?

**RS:** One of the key components is storytelling. This is why country music is so popular, because a lot of country music tells stories, which is why it's a popular genre. So hip hop, when you tell stories, it causes people to listen and dig deep into the song. And think about the type of shows that we watch on Netflix or Hulu, our minds are drawn to suspense. We're drawn to climax. We're drawn to twists and turns. Because we always want to know what the surprise is. We always want to know what's behind that wall.

**RRX:** That ties into one of the songs you suggested I check out. "Wet Dreams" by J. Cole. I saw the title, and was like, is this going to be racy? But it was actually a very sweet, romantic story about first love. A great surprise.

**RS:** I see what you're saying about my song "Soul Mate" and the song by J. Cole. These are key components that we like to talk about. Think about some of the greatest movies you've ever seen, they have action. They have storytelling. Plots, twists and turns that you don't expect. And then of course, there's always some love scenes in it. The guy gets the girl, or the girl gets the guy in the end. Those are key components.

**RRX:** Let's show some love for the female side of rap. I'm so old "Push It"

was a big hit at my middle school dance. Who should I listen to so I can update my playlist?

**RS:** Yeah, that's definitely old school. LOL. Check out Young M.A. Cardi B, and Snow Tha Project.

**RRX:** Wow – those were all uniquely awesome. I'm glad to see the women are out there representing strong! I especially dig the raw honesty of Young M.A. and the friendly vibes of the Snow Tha Product track. One of the things I love about rap is the honesty involved in the lyrics.

Okay - I'm obsessed with rapping fast. I don't know why, but I really love to (I feel kind of silly saying so) spit those lyrics! I know there is hope for me! The song "Lucky You" from Joyner and Eminem was like - woah! That's some serious work. What suggestions do you have for me to learn how to get my motor skills up to speed?

**RS:** Yes - it's the skills! It really comes over time. The more you write and the more you rap to a beat, you'll learn how to find different syllables. The thing to worry about is getting the basics down first. The delivery, the timing of the words, how to write a beat. Work on the basics, and then rapping fast and using different methods of rapping, that's something that will come naturally over time.

But it's real dope once you get good at it. Just keep at it.

**RRX:** Thank you so much for catching up with me. You're really fun to talk with and I learned so much! I definitely hope people check out your music - it has all of the elements we talked about! You can find Reggy Steel on Distrokid, YouTube or your favorite streaming and social media sites!

I can't wait to see you around and check out what is next! Thanks for keeping it real and reminding me about how storytelling sets a foundation for a compelling song, no matter the genre. I think your music is very engaging, and I hope to hear more!

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# Mark Foster

*Of the Albany  
Symphony Orchestra -  
Capital Region  
Timekeepers*

**BY OP CALLAGHAN**

Mark Foster. Photo provided.

**M**ark Foster has been a staple of the local music scene forever. As a member of the Grammy winning Albany Symphony Orchestra for over 40 years, he has performed at Carnegie Hall and The Kennedy Center, and has recorded over two dozen albums. Mark has performed several seasons with the Williamstown Theater Festival and has performed in Moscow and Jordan with the New York State Theater Institute. Mark is a music professor at RPI, The College of St. Rose, and he is the co-conductor of the Empire State Youth Percussion Ensemble. Mark does it all, from classical to jazz to rock drums. He is a true master of his craft, and has performed with Stewart Copeland, Ringo Starr, Levon Helm, Aretha Franklin, Wanda Jackson, and countless others. When I decided to begin drumming at the age of eight, my father asked around; “Who should my son take lessons with”? The answer, inevitably, was Mark Foster. I studied with Mark for several years in middle school and high

school. As a new student, I was in awe of his talents and abilities. Over 40 years later, I am still in awe. Mark is patient, kind, knowledgeable and a fantastic person. So please welcome, Mark Foster!

**RRX:** Hi Mark! Welcome. Tell us how you came to discover the drums.

**MF:** My first kit was a toy kit with cardboard heads for Christmas. It had a big rainbow on the bass drum head, at the age of four. In fourth grade my family moved to the other end of the block, where a neighborhood dad played drums on the weekend. His son had a garage band, and I would go over and check them out. This was around the same time as The Beatles and the whole British invasion was happening and was a great time for music in general.

**RRX:** Who are some of your earliest influences?

**MF:** The British Invasion was the biggest early influence; Ringo, Dave Clark, actually Bobby Graham played on those records and with a lot of the

other British bands, Ginger Baker, then the Allman Brothers, and I listened to a lot of Zappa. My cousin had Freak Out right when it came out. Then I got into jazz, mostly CTI (Creed Taylor Incorporated) stuff, some Blue Note, Mahavishnu, Chick, Herbie, etc., so for drummers it was Cobham, Harvey Mason, Steve Gadd, Jack DeJohnette, Lenny White, and I especially loved what Aynsley Dunbar did with Zappa. But Tony and Elvin were so deep. My dad bought me “Emergency!” for my birthday in 1970, but it took me several years of listening to appreciate that album. Coltrane’s “Crescent” and Wayne Shorter’s “Speak No Evil” were so elegant. I should say that the immersive experience of music is what drew me to my enjoyment and involvement in music versus banging on the drums or identifying with a certain style. I really got that from listening to my older brother and sister’s records. That connection with an age just before I was born and various locations; NYC, Detroit, the West Coast continues to be

intriguing. The classic reverb that Columbia used for the Johnny Mathis records, The wall of The Bitter End on the cover of Peter, Paul, and Mary. Everything from Motown. The Beach Boys from “Help Me Rhonda” to “The Warmth Of The Sun”.

**RRX:** Were your parents in favor of your decision to pursue drumming as a career?

**MF:** Well, the «decision» took place in stages; they supported my Eastman degree and understood that the career thing is not as direct as most jobs, but they had me take some civil service tests as a fall back. They came to appreciate all aspects including rock bands, symphonic, and teaching as part of the package.

**RRX:** Certainly. Do you play any other instruments?

**MF:** Not professionally. I have functional piano skills and learned the basics on many instruments in college. I took a few years of piano lessons from Sister Annette Covatta from grades

2-4. I was a lousy student, but she was a great teacher.

**RRX:** As a percussionist, you can play it all, from snare drum to tympani to mallet percussion and drum set. What is your favorite thing to play?

**MF:** Drum set is still the most fun. Mallets and percussion (conga, shakers, etc.) can also be just as fun, but largely a different function musically. And it's a lot more pleasurable in the morning to be playing something on vibes or marimba versus the drum set.

**RRX:** Do you have a favorite or least favorite gig?

**MF:** I can't really say. Every gig is a combination of how I played, everyone else's contribution, and the vibe in the room. All of that can change over the course of the night, and then your perception can change, even days after the gig. Sometimes a gig is very stressful as you prepare and in performance but rewarding in the end. Other gigs are easy or fun, but after a while can be somewhat unfulfilling. If there's a balance, you don't necessarily rate each one, you know?

**RRX:** I do. Do you ever play double bass?

**MF:** Quick answer, no. But I have a double pedal. I don't even remember why I got it- I might have been trying some options working through covering some programmed parts. I never really listen to or play music with a double kick, except Cream or Cobham. It never really clicked with me.

**RRX:** Tell me about working with Stewart Copeland.

**MF:** I think that David Alan Miller and Stewart shared the same publicist or something- I may have that wrong, but Stewart was putting together what became the "Orchestralli" project and we did both full orchestra and the smaller Dogs ensemble if I recall correctly. He used one of these pieces when he did the drum set feature on Letterman. It had to cost a bundle for Stewart because we were all hired at full rate,

and he had the Record Plant mobile unit. Everyone had headphones, it was all synced to the computer. I believe it got bogged down in the process to mix it live from the very live Troy Music Hall, but harder to edit with all that sound and so many variables. They built his drum riser in the middle of the hall over the seats, which was very cool. It was fun to tell him about first meeting him when The Police played the Hullabaloo. I was able to get into the back room after the gig thanks to Todd Nelson. (Stewart's brother ran the record company that Fear of Strangers signed to). That was a memorable night; the first time that I, along with The Police, met the infamous leopard. I understand Sting was pretty freaked out about that.

**RRX:** I understand that you're a Frank Zappa fan. Care to comment on the various drummers of Zappa?

**MF:** I saw Zappa at Smith College in '71. It was around the "200 Motels", "Fillmore East", "Just Another Band from LA" era and it was simply a great concert in every way. Aynsley (Dunbar) was playing Hayman drums and got a very unique sound. He had a loose feel while nailing all of Zappa's figures.

Of the earlier era stuff, I really liked "Burnt Weenie Sandwich" and "Uncle Meat", and a large part of that was the writing and Ruth's (Underwood) mallet and percussion stuff. And later with "Apostrophe", "Roxy" and "Elsewhere" had a lot of cool songs and arrangements. The combination of Ralph Humphrey and Chester Thompson worked especially well. I had a chance to talk to Aynsley when he was with Journey and they did a free concert at SPAC. I could tell that he felt that Ralph (Humphrey) was able to navigate the charts and direction more to Frank's liking. Ralph was good, but it was only when they added Chester that the groove got more interesting. Although I wouldn't compare the styles, that's why Butch (Trucks) and Jaimoe sounded so good together with the Allman

Brothers. Instead of being heavier, it became lighter. The two drummer thing is interesting to me. A lot more interesting than the NO drummer thing which seems to be more common these days! I have done the two drummer thing several times; with Malcolm Travis and Ted Were and with Al Kash later on, all with incarnations of bands with Rick Bedrosian. I also did a fun multi-drum thing that Mike Benedict put on for a few years. The Monday night hang with Family Tree at Putnam place every Monday works so well. Chad and Steve, as well as everyone else, always sound great. Anyone who sits in immediately fits in well. They keep it open, but it never, ever descends into a bad version of open mic night.

Back to Zappa! Of course, Terry Bozio and Vinnie Colaiuta and Chad Wackerman were all incredible, but I didn't like the music as much from that era. I saw Zappa with Vinnie at the Palace. Vinnie was set up on the side up front so you could see him at all times. It was amazing, but not really musically memorable to me.

**RRX:** Nice! Ok, now some fun stuff. Do you own rototoms? Concert Toms? Electronic drums, or a cocktail kit?

**MF:** Roto's! I have a billion rototoms, including a set that Sarah Ayers gave me that were Sarge's, but have never used a single one with a drum set. There's a lot of symphonic writing where they're used - sometimes with specific pitches and tuning within the piece. I sometimes teach tympani using a pair of larger sized pedal ones I got from Mike Demarco. So having all those sizes is useful. A few were even used this past weekend for the symphony. Concert Toms? No, and ironically more often these days double headed toms are preferred. Again, the symphony needed seven this past weekend, all double headed. Electronics, Drumkat, Malletkat, triggers and modules; never did a pad kit or Simmons. I picked up

the Yamaha EAD that mounts to the kick and connects to the module. Electronics seem to be best when it supplements real stuff, and best when it's just a few things vs. a real complicated interconnected monster. Cocktail kit? No, I've played them occasionally. Too many compromises with the sound. It can be a cool look, and I get that.

**RRX:** If you weren't a drummer, what would you be doing? Have you had another career?

**MF:** I have had various summer jobs and the like. I was able to function ok whatever it was, but really not only prefer anything I've done with music; teaching as well as performing directly, but to me the hang with the creative community is just as important as the work itself.

**RRX:** What are some of your other hobbies, interests or passions?

**MF:** There's so much to music, that pretty much trumps anything else. I enjoy going for walks, comedy shows or some political stuff like a good columnist or an SNL sketch. going to Mass Moca or a good restaurant. Pretty normal stuff. I was never interested in history as a subject but continue to be fascinated to learn about local history and memories from older siblings about this area and other shared experiences. I just finished a book by John O'Hern, "Not the Kennedys", about growing up here which was great.

**RRX:** What are you most proud of as a performer, composer, or teacher?

**MF:** Any bit of happiness and/or success of any of the students I've had some part in assisting through the years is always nice. Most of that success is through their work and talent, but if I've been able to provide any general or specific guidance, that is gratifying.

Mark Foster can be seen with The Albany Symphony, or any of his multiple appearances. Do yourself a favor and watch him play. He is truly a master at work.

# Wanna Hear Some Strange?

## BY JOHNNY MYSTERY

**T**ime to geek out with some songs you've probably never heard. Most obscure, some were hits, all included for reasons which will be explained as we go along. Every one of them can be found easily online. You should give them a spin at least once because life is too short to listen to music that sucks.

"Fight Fire" by The Golliwogs: Before they were Credence Clearwater Revival they were The Golliwogs. So what's in a name? Duh...they had hits as CCR. John Fogarty and the boys released several 45s on Fantasy Records before becoming CCR and this one is the best. It has the Creedence feel to it and Fogarty's vocal is in top form. This is included on the Pebbles box set, which is a must for all garage fans.

"White Lies and Blue Eyes" by Bullet: Hey, it's a hit! Went top 20 in the Fall of 1971. Often cited as one of the first power pop records. Probably the first power pop U.S. hit as the great Badfinger from England was also kicking out power pop around that time. Dig that horn arrangement! Songs like this were getting fewer and fewer as the charts were being overrun by the likes of The Carpenters, Bread and Olivia Newton John. No wonder we went from AM to FM...

"Captain Groovy and his Bubblegum Army" by Captain Groovy: This is the fully produced theme song to a cartoon that never happened, and I so wish it did. Who knows what it would have been about? Not me but I'll bet it would have been trippy. Released on the ill-fated Super K label about 1969-ish, it is one of the heaviest bubblegum records ever. Full of fuzzy guitars,

massive organ and swirling riffs. Captain Groovy's gonna take you away. Yeah right, I wish....

"Hey Joe/Midnight Hour" by The Haywoods: It's a double sider by The Haywoods....yes, those Haywoods....as in Bo Donaldson and the...as in "Billy Don't Be A Hero" AM gold. Not a great record by any stretch but still better than anything they made after they sold their soul to the company. Besides, you gotta respect a band that puts out a record of two of the most played tunes of the 60's. The band showed some respect to The Leaves by doing an arrangement of "Hey Joe" just like theirs. I never even knew about this record till I learned that Bo himself found a few copies kicking around his attic and he was selling them for 500 clams each. Hey Bo, what's the deal? Have the Billy royalties dried up already?

"Midnight Hour" by The Wanted: Now here's a version of "Midnight Hour" that's pretty damn cool. This Detroit band came up with their own intro and bridge that truly makes it their own. I've got quite a few versions of this classic, first done by Wilson Picket and it's become one of my favorites. I first found a nice scratchy copy, (I like scratchy, builds character), on A&M Records during one of my marathon crate digs down at Jimmy's shop on River Street. Big smiles came up when we slapped it on the turntable as this was a find! Looking it up, I found it was first released on Detroit Sound Records and even that copy was selling for Chicklets. In other words, it's a bonafide rare obscurity from 1966 that won't break the bank.

"In The Pines" by Tiny Tim: You

wanna talk strange? This is the one. I have no doubt you've heard Nirvana's version, which is commonly known as "Where Did You Sleep Last Night." Blues folks have also heard the magic 12-stringer fingers of Leadbelly belt out his haunting standard. But I guarantee you've never heard anything like Tim's version. A single acoustic guitar and Tiny's unmistakable vocal, kicks things off as it quickly swells into a "House of the Rising Sun" feel. The creepy organ solo is outstanding as Tim belts out the final lyrics then goes on to have a nervous breakdown as the organ drones. This song straddles the genres of blues and Southern Gothic. You come on

board thinking it's going to be a novelty song, but you'll come away with a whole different perspective. It's quite the feat from a cat who spent his life covering music from the Vaudeville era. Ironically, it's a serious song made by an artist nobody took seriously. Found this on a two CD compilation from Red Bird records. As if things couldn't get weirder. Now get out and hit the bins!

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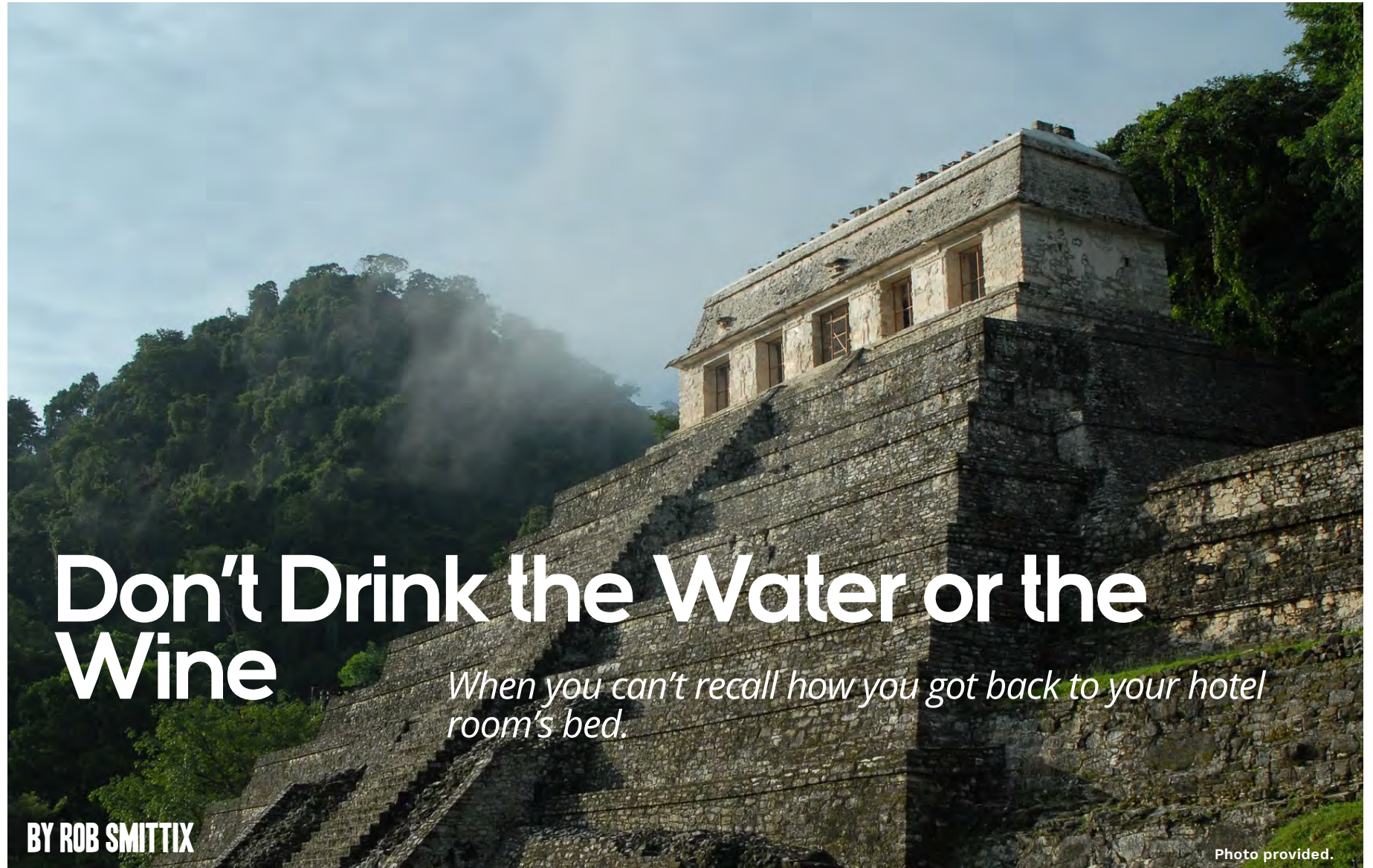
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# Don't Drink the Water or the Wine

*When you can't recall how you got back to your hotel room's bed.*

**BY ROB SMITTIX**

Photo provided.

I just got back from Mexico and I wanted to share my experience with y'all. Just kidding I don't say y'all, I'm from the capital of New York, I say you all. This was my fourth time visiting Cancun and I do recommend going there if you've never been, it's by far one of the most affordable tropical vacations that you can take, especially if you get an all-inclusive resort. That does mean you can eat and drink as much as you'd like with no additional cost but please don't be a cheapskate and tip your servers, your U.S. dollar goes a long way there. I felt like a baller.

They do say don't drink the water and this is 100% factual. I never

intentionally drank the water but on two of my previous visits I did return home with what they call Montezuma's revenge. Fortunately, this trip I did not suffer these consequences, but something very strange did happen to me on my last night there. I'll try to explain later.

So, my wife and I decided we needed a getaway to the place that I proposed to her back in 2014, Cancun Mexico. We had a great time all week long, eating like royalty and drinking like fish. Now in the states (as we call it only when we are not in the country), if I drank a 12 pack I'd be pretty tipsy and I'd want to take a nap but at these

all-inclusive resorts for some reason I can drink 30 drinks and barely have a buzz. So obviously they are watering down the drinks. I bring this up now for what I am about to tell you soon about my last night of vacation experience.

On Wednesday we got on a ferry and went to Isla Mujeres (Island of Woman). Beautiful beach and more realistic atmosphere but be warned if you go here, you will feel like everyone is trying to hustle you. It's kind of like Time Square in that sense and it gets old really quick. Just let me walk down the street in peace. However, if you like tequila almost all the shops give you free shots just to browse.

Thursday we went parasailing, what a relaxing and enjoyable undertaking. We could see giant sea turtles swimming in the crystal blue waters below. We choose one excursion every time we come here. In previous years we went in a submarine scanning a coral reef, snorkeling in cenotes and traveling to Mayan ruins. These are truly bucket-list adventures but then there was Friday.

Friday night was our last night there and we did our best to soak it all in before it's "back to life, back to reality." I enjoy all sorts of music and the

*Continued on Page 34...*



Continued from Page 33.

week was certainly full of mariachi and merengue performances. I love cultural music even though I can't understand a single lyric but on Friday night the mood changed because the band was pure rock n roll!

The band is called Quantica and they played covers from Roy Orbison, Blondie to CCR. The setlist was perfect for a resort setting but the band does in fact have original material that can be found at their website [quantica.mx](http://quantica.mx). Definitely worth checking out!

Okay, so here's where it gets weird. Like I told you from the beginning, I can handle my alcohol, especially watered-down drinks like we were being served at the resort. The only difference about Friday night was I did drink an entire bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon. So, I will admit my buzz was buzzing a bit more than the rest of the week. However, I was totally coherent and not at all obliterated.

After Quantica left the stage, I told my wife I was going to go over and talk to them. I must've been talking shop with them a little longer than expected and my wife got bored and decided to take a walk by the beach. The last thing I remember was talking to the band and then I wake up in my hotel room bed with my shoes still on.

I can't remember anything at all after talking to the band that Friday night. My wife informed me that I was carried to the room by employees of the resort. She couldn't help me fill in the gaps because we got separated from each other when she took that beach walk. In all my life I have never had a black out experience from drinking and like I said I was inebriated but not to the point that I wanted to crawl up on the floor and sleep.

There are five photos on my phone that were taken that night after I talked to the band. Blurred photos of palm trees and smeared lights. I don't

remember taking these and I couldn't even pinpoint where I was when they were taken. So, what actually happened?

Was I drugged?

Was I abducted and probed by aliens?

I'm not sure I will ever know the truth but what a crazy way to end my vacation.

Still trying to wrap my head around these missing hours of my life, it was indeed time to head to the airport. Looking out the window of the shuttle was eye-opening event because we left the hotel district and entered a part of town tourists probably don't visit often. I've witnessed the poverty there in previous trips. I even saw a toddler in a diaper hanging in an alley unsupervised in the past but this time I saw dogs. That's right full-grown dogs of various breeds walking in packs without owners, just strolling along side of the road. I've never witnessed this before. Anyway, we finally arrive at the Cancun Airport.

As you know airport prices suck. We needed a snack and bought a bag of munchies for 10 U.S. dollars or somewhere around 207 Mexican pesos. We ate maybe a quarter of the bag but when we got to the United States the T.S.A. (which stands for Throw Stuff Away) made us toss the bag, that we purposely bought to last us because we weren't going to have time for a meal.

Anyway, our flights got changed, even though we were trying to get to Albany, JetBlue decided we would fly to JFK airport in Queens and then immediately board our next flight taking us in the wrong direction, all the way to Ft. Lauderdale. Then the layover was overnight, so we got a hotel in Florida before flying to Albany in the morning. That just seems pointless. All in all, the trip was great, my wife and I got to spend much needed alone time together even though I can't account for all of hours.



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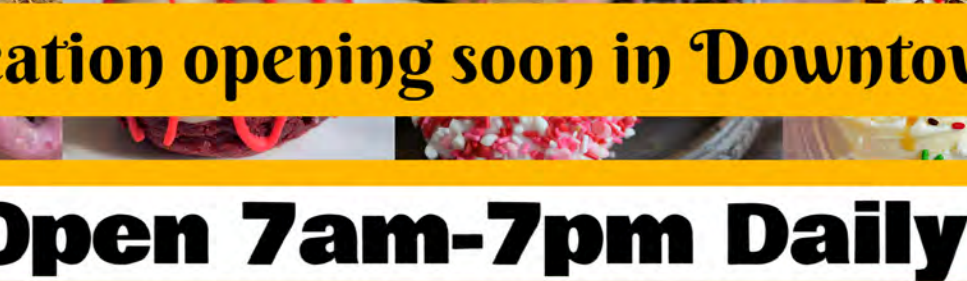


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# Let's Talk Growing!

BY WILSON

The plants we met last time are now six weeks old. Let's review to catch up.

My buddy who is getting back into growing ordered the seeds he wants to grow - Durban Poison and DJ Short Blueberry - and they arrived with some extra seeds, compliments of seller.

He decided to test his new grow tent set up with the free seeds. A systems test, if you will.

He grew those eight free seeds under fluorescent four-foot T5's with a mixed spectrum and a full spectrum with violet or blue to mimic the spring sun for about 16 days before he moved them into bigger pots, changed the soil and changed the lights to 400-watt metal halide.

He changed the amount of light too. 24 hours of fluorescent light became 12 hours a day of 400-watt metal halide light, 12 hours a day of darkness.

"This tricks the plants into thinking it is the end of summer and makes them begin to flower so I can determine the males from the females. It usually takes five days, but these took seven," he says. "They had five weeks of vegetative growth and one week of flowering when that growth ceased, so I could sex them."

At the end of the seven days he had four males and four females. The males were removed, and the four females went back to 24 hours of light, which now tricks them into thinking its spring again and puts them back into vegetative growth. They will stay in the one-gallon pots for two more weeks before they are transplanted into the

seven-gallon pots they will be in until they are harvested.

Vegetative growth will continue for three to four weeks before he moves them back to 12 hours on, 12 hours off to start the flowering stage, which will go on for two to three months until they are ready to be harvested.

So far - the tent, fans, filters, and lights are working exactly like they should be. The test is a success.

His bible for all of this is "Marijuana Botany (An Advanced Study: The Propagation and Breeding of Distinctive Cannabis)" by Robert Connell Clarke. You know where you can order it.

He's excited to get the next set of seeds started and he specifically did not order feminized seeds because he wants both males and females. The males will produce all the seeds he will need to grow the Durban and Blueberry for years to come.

About those, from Wikileaf:

"With a menacing name that hints at its powerful psychoactivity, Durban Poison is a pure South African sativa landrace. It is a bold and sticky variety that's well adapted to a variety of growing conditions. Durban Poison boasts a THC content of between 15% and 25%."

"DJ Short Blueberry, or just Blueberry, is a popular Indica-dominant hybrid strain of cannabis. Despite the fact that this strain has been available on the market for more than 30 years ... to create this incredibly popular strain, DJ Short crossbred two popular Sativa plants, Thai and Purple Thai, with a powerful Afghani Indica."

(Google "The Willy Wonka of Pot" and read the article of the same name

written by Jason Fagone to learn more about DJ Short.)

The seeds were legally ordered and shipped from DC Seed Exchange. Per the FAQ on their website "For individuals in the United States, DCSE and its affiliates provide "souvenir seeds," otherwise known as hemp seeds, that are negligible in THC and are legal in most states and countries to possess. Our souvenir seeds may be used for collection, for food, or for genetic preservation purposes. We do not condone illegal acts with our products!"

"The seeds get delivered right to

your door by the US Postal Service. Seeds are legal now, the government ruled there was no THC in seeds. God bless America," he said.

"I love the effect of the South African sativas. I still have to get the Malawi Gold, it comes from an area north of Durban. I like the sativas that are psychedelic in a way," the grower said.

I was talking to another friend of mine who grows, and he was visibly excited when I said Durban Poison and he was familiar with the DJ Short's famous Blueberry. I need to get these growers together.



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# July Horoscopes

BY BRANDON RUSS

Welcome to the Monthly Astrology Feature. I'm Conscious Medium Brandon Russ and I combine all the tools of the trade for your journey. Connect with me at <http://linktr.ee/brandonruss> for events, classes and private readings.

The good news is, it's sorta quiet, the bad news, the quiet can make it a touch boring, but isn't that perfect! Pretty quiet until late July where LEO becomes the influencer, with the New Moon, Mercury and SUN are all in Leo at once. Not to mention Jupiter goes Retrograde!...get ready to ROAR!

**Aries** – July is a fantastic time for you! Enjoy the fire energy without being the center of attention. Enjoy friends, family and romance!

**Taurus** – Touch of nostalgia combined with some Jupiter Empowerment. The Capricorn moon will make things seem easy for harmony and feeling your best.

**Gemini** - Stick to the plan! Follow through on the dreams, the tactics, and the vision. Let fate guide your path right now. If you did the work, the rewards are a plenty

**Cancer** - Only six more months to Christmas and you already started your shopping. Your strength and perseverance (and planning) mean everything, so why change. Mercury and

communication are paramount.

**Leo** - Harmony and Peace with gentle Venus and a Capricorn moon. You are in synch with your spirit and surroundings. Careful not to waste energy on jealousy and petty stuff.

**Virgo** - Confidence is high, repeat, confidence...is high. Use that confidence in your prowess for a mate, advancement or a passion.

**Libra** - Your usual good time is amped up with a serious great full moon in Capricorn, you want to take the world by storm. It's time to create and take control.

**Scorpio** - The Jerry Maguire moment goes to...Scorpio. Big ideas and 'who's coming with me' is the logo for the month!

**Sagittarius** – Career is a focus right now. So, while others have fun, you have something to prove. So do it! The fun will come, now is the time for discipline.

**Capricorn** - Hello Karma, my old friend. You've come to mess with me again. I didn't mean to be so charming...I whispered slight to the deserving, but the echo of silence forever golden, a lesson remembered.

**Aquarius** – So having the time of your life, are you? Avoid the negative... anyone that's a little too 'Mars' for you; aggressive, malcontent, or negative, just steamroll them as a good time.

**Pisces** – Don't be a moody bitch. But it's your nature and alone time is on the menu now. Be reflective on yourself and try not to get any on people around you. Heal if you must.

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# Just Another Night in La La Land

BY VEGAS NACY

The Year was 1997, I think. My band at the time was Bone Box and we had two showcases in NYC on the same day. Scott Koenig (RIP) was helping us out with some label reps. Scott was influential back in the day working with Type O Negative, Biohazard, Downset, Slayer etc. The first show was at CBGB's and it went well, but as we sat and had a drink afterwards, I drink Jack on the rocks and I like to chew the ice when the Jack is gone. I bit into what I thought was a cube, but it was warm and crunchy. I spit it out and son of a biscuit it was a cockroach! I lost it. I threw the glass against the wall and we started to head to the next show at the continental. We stopped at a bodega to get some snacks. I got Reese's peanut butter cups and as we walk I open it, take a bite and...maggots! Yes, maggots crawling out of it. As a germaphobe I was going insane. This really set me off for the night.

We played the next show and now I'm pretty drunk. We start walking and out of nowhere I say to the band "you guys are no fun I'm out of here" jump in a cab and tell the driver to "take me somewhere fun". He drops me off at the scrap bar, a tiny but legendary spot. I

go in, order a Long Island iced tea, pound it and immediately put my glass through the glass table near the seating area. The bouncer yoked me up and tossed me out. Now, we didn't have cell phones back then so I go to another club where I heard some live music. I order a Long Island iced tea and some chicken wings. As I'm eating, I take my shoes off and put them up on the bar rail. With sauce all over my face the bouncer comes over and we have words, and he finally says "ya gotta go" Yes, I became the guy that I can't stand when I'm bouncing. Now, I am really feeling no pain. It's pitch black out and I have strayed from my path. As I'm trying to figure out how the hell I'm getting back to Albany, a car pulls beside me, and I hear "Vegas?" It's my brother Dan Russamano and a few others. I couldn't believe out of all the streets at that particular time, I get saved by some great people. They let me crash at their hotel and I drove back with them in the morning. Literally they probably saved my life!

I have tons of stories like this so more to come!

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# Prog Rock Digest

BY KLYDE KADIDDLEHUMPER

Well now. When someone says the word Prog (more formally Progressive Music/Rock) – what comes to mind? A bunch of crazy people noodling around in some incomprehensible musical space?

Perhaps Rush. Perhaps ELP. But where did this all come from?

Let's take a step back.

Mozart was considered progressive and, as it was once said, there were too many notes.

Drumming – we can settle on drumming, right? The first progressive drummer I heard was Gene Krupa. Oh, wait, that was the 40's and 50's.

Well.... screaming guitars – oh no, hang on – Robert Johnson. All this time later, we remember him not only for his playing, but for the fact that he sold his soul for the talent. Would you?

Progressive is a state of mind and a state of time.

We live in the age of the autotune – the single most evil invention ever. Yup, beats the daylights out of the atomic bomb or, maybe, My Pillow.

Progressive music is not new... Miles, Monk, Mingus, "Trane were all progressive. Hell, "Bitches Brew" is still the gold standard.

Make no mistake, there are plenty of hacks – as opposed to Steve Hackett, who is a bloody genius.

Being progressive means taking risks and pushing the boundaries. A couple examples come to mind that you may not realize are pretty darned progressive.

There is a story about the late, great Chick Corea. As it was told to me, while Chick was in music school, his mentor/

professor went on sabbatical and Chick had the keys to his office. Of course, the professor had a grand piano in said office. Chick would often practice on that piano. Well, the professor comes back, goes to his office and starts to play. The cacophonies sound that the piano made rattled the man. Turns out Chick had retuned the piano in quarter tones and didn't tune it back. Amongst the most gangster progressive acts EVER.

Let's take another example. Movie themes are not, usually, what you consider progressive. Think back to the original Michael Myers film – "Halloween", starring Donald Pleasence and Jamie Lee Curtis (best horror film screamer ever). The theme is so progressive – and fittingly – written in 13 time. Put the tune in your head and then count to it like this: 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2, 1-2. Add it up – 13. Now that you have that earworm – you are welcome.

There are many people and bands who we can call progressive. The category is interesting. Heck, one of the most prog bands out there won the first ever metal category at the Grammys... if you don't know, look it up. Let's just say that the winner in that category was not Metallica.

Look forward to discussions about bands, various types and the people who have cross-pollinated. The interesting names and styles.

In the meantime – be well and don't let the mainstream get you down. There is more out there than you might imagine (unless, of course you are already a prog fan).

Till then...



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# Observations and Ramblings from a Cranky Old Guy

BY JEFF SPAULDING

No matter who you are, we all have certain “moments” in our lives. Some are expected, some unexpected. Some are happy, some considered “WTF”. All have some sort of meaning. These “moments start when you’re young and continue until you assume room temperature. If you think about it, your life creates “moments” for others, even after you’re gone. Let’s review so you understand what I mean. You may not relate to all, but I remember them in full detail

Your first word. Your first tooth. Your first day of school. Your first kiss. Your first boyfriend/girlfriend. Your first time getting laid. Your first adult drink. Your first joint. Your first marriage. Your first divorce. Your first heart attack.

Just to this writing I experienced another “moment” in my life. I was expecting it. However, I didn’t expect the reaction I had. This marked a passage, a time in my life that I call a “put up or shut up” moment. And I only had to wait 66 years and four months for this moment to happen.

I got my first ever (and hopefully first of many) Social Security check. According to the government, I’m “officially” a cranky old guy. I could have waited to get these checks. I’m still working and bringing in income. I originally planned to wait until I was 70 to take the max amount. I still have it on my bucket list to work until 71, to make an even 50 years in broadcasting. So why am I taking it now? I blame two people, in a complimentary way,

my wife, and a co-worker who is a few years older than I am.

I’ll start with my wife. She finally retired from her full-time job, and has a pension. She is holding on taking her Social Security in about four years when she hits 66 and 4 months. Since her pension is less than her regular salary, my monthly Social Security checks keeps the income in check (pun intended) and then some. For the time being, finances are not a problem.

Now, my co-worker. He made a very good point. Yes, I could wait until I am 70 to get the max. However, what if I do that, and one month later, I drop dead? Think of all the wasted money on the table I threw away. So, it made sense taking it when I did, knowing our beloved government in Washington will take care of needy senior citizens in their biggest time of need. I will now give you a moment to (A) laugh out loud (B) shake your head in shame or (C) throw up.

So, all the while getting ready to get this first check sent to me, I simply thought of it as a perk, a bonus, a way to get a little extra scratch. Then I saw the check deposited in my account and it hit me, hard, this is kinda the first step to the box, the final “moment” in my life.

Suddenly, everything became clearer by the minute, and I started to ask myself some questions. Do I want to retire now? If I do, can I afford it? What will I do if I retire? Will I drive my wife crazy at home when I retire? Will I drive myself crazy at home when I

retire? Will tomorrow be the day I can’t work anymore, as opposed to don’t want to work anymore? Is it too late to take care of my health?

Honestly, when I signed up for Social Security, none of those questions went through my mind. Remember when you left your parents and became an adult? You couldn’t wait to be on your own, drinking and smoking and screwing. Then the bills you never had to pay for started coming in. Then your paycheck runs out three days before you’re scheduled to get the next one.

And then one day it burns when you pee and you have to take care of it on your own.

My closing point is, I am proud to hit the stage in my life where I can get Social Security. I’m also kinda shocked I made it long enough to get Social Security. Young or old, I’m an asshole till I die.

Be hearing you

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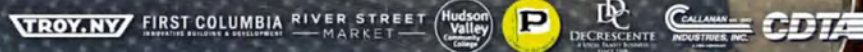
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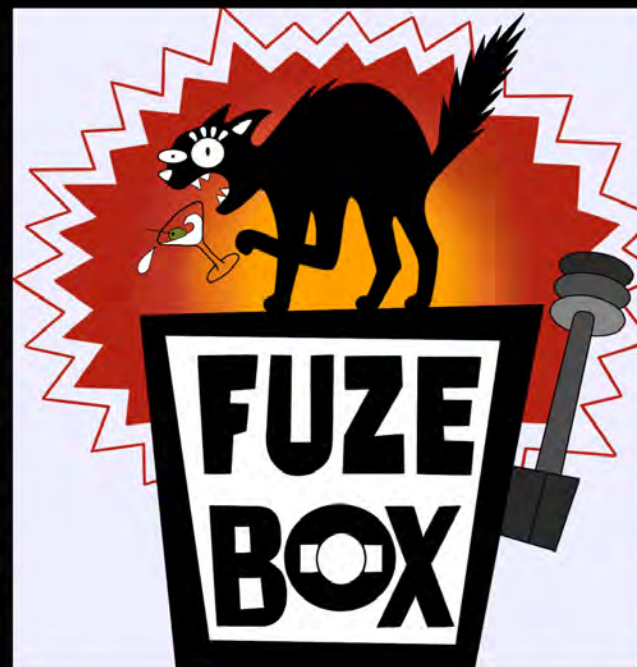
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