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September 2023

Vol. 5, Issue 9



## FRANKIE CAVONE

Skater-turned-videographer brings a new outlook to the visual arts.

**3**

## WET SPECIMENS

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**30**

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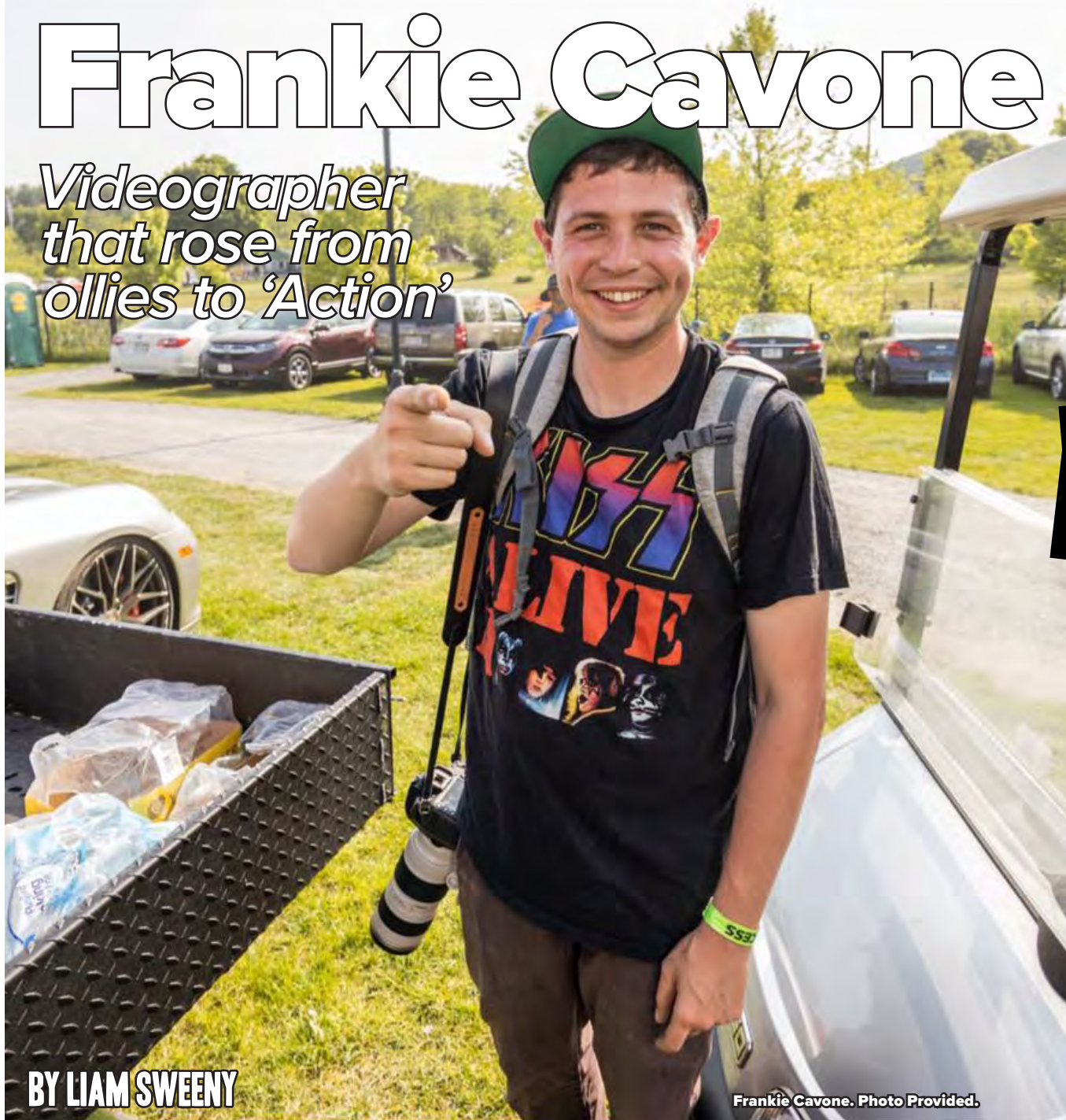


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# Frankie Cavone

*Videographer  
that rose from  
ollies to 'Action'*



**BY LIAM SWEENEY**

Frankie Cavone. Photo Provided.

It's funny how you get into the creative arts. In Frankie Cavone's case, it was very physical, on four wheels, with grinding and ollies. This would, in a series of fortunate incidents, put him on the path to video production and entertainment news outlet Mirth Films. You may know his work; in fact, you

may know it and not know it was his. It stands up against any video out there, and Frankie's just a great guy.

I connect with Frankie, and we talk about 360-degree film techniques.

**RRX:** I try to shy away from controversy, as we're an (Addams) family-friendly program, but I think it's time

to air this, and from what I've recently learned, you have a pony in the race. Reubens. So, I am ardently in the camp of corned beef, Swiss, kraut, and Russian dressing on rye. No pastrami, no Thousand Island. Am I a heathen?

**FC:** Russian all day, baby. In Fact, Ken's Russian Dressing is hands down







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the best dressing for a Reuben. And get that pastrami sh\*t out of here. Sounds like you know your stuff Liam!

**RRX:** You started a video production/entertainment news outlet called Mirth Films. I think being that it's seven years old, "started" probably isn't the right word. The name Mirth came from a kind of inside joke that carried over the years. Can you explain it to our readers? The name origin, but also the feeling that inspired Mirth Films?

**FC:** We are celebrating our fifth year as a company and at the end of the day, I am very thankful to have some of my bestest friends working alongside me. Five years ago, I was sitting on my friend's couch drinking my usual six pack of Busch and Cumby's black iced coffee and knew that I wanted to start a publication/video company hybrid but knew it had to have the right name. Years before this my friends and I had an inside joke where we all would say "Mirth Is King!" Now what the f\*\*\* does

that mean? Well at first it had zero meaning to us. The slogan all came from my friend wanting to watch a Phish live stream at his apartment but unfortunately his Wi-Fi wasn't working so he went to his upstairs neighbors to ask for the WiFi password and that happened to be "Mirthisking." So, at the end of the day, I named Mirth Films after that password/inside joke that my friends and I bonded over.

**RRX:** The beauty of what you do is that you make it look effortless. When I watch your videos, I'm tempted to think you just opened your camera and waved a wand, and all the angles and cuts just fell in line, but really, it's work. It's maybe a maxim that if you're really good at what you do, people will think it's easy. Does that ever get in your way?

**FC:** When it comes to making videos, I want to be able to say at the end of the day that I put in my full energy. Nothing is more important than the

quality of our content. While quality is a big focus, I also want to make sure that our content is making an impact big or small. We have a lot of great stories to be told in Upstate NY and we just want to tell them right.

**RRX:** You cover entertainment news in Upstate New York, as well as putting together video production for people who come to you. Have you always wanted to do entertainment, or I should say entertainment only, or did you cut your teeth off something like video-journalism? If so, any difficult scenes or moments?

**FC:** To be completely honest, I have no clue how I ended up where I am today, but I am grateful for it. I really didn't even have a why either. But what I can say is that if it wasn't for skateboarding, I would have never picked up a camera in any form.

**RRX:** You recently did a documentary called Grapplin' Greg: The Story of Greg Bell. Greg Bell is a local music

promoter with over 30 years of bringing shows to the area. It was well-received, and I'm sure people who saw it would love a quick "The making of..." So here and now is your chance to do that.

**FC:** I, among many other individuals owe a lot to Greg Bell for always elevating the great music scene we have here in the Capital Region. While a "making of" would be pretty rad, I'd rather take that time/energy to shine a light on someone else.

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

**FC:** All I need to say is to follow the golden rule, respect others' creative visions, and don't forget to ask for extra dressing while ordering a Reuben out on the town. Great Reubens never have enough dressing.



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# the Crawl

BY JORDAN LANEGAN

**W**ell, dang y'all! It's been a while, hasn't it? Hello again – I've missed you. Happy End of Summer.

I hope all of your summers were filled with as much sweetness as mine was. From cookouts, concerts, days on the water, nights filled with dancing, laughter and good friends, and a whole month jampacked with my crazy family in Texas and Oklahoma, I've certainly had my fill and am ready to roll into the slower, cooler, and cozier months.

It's been nearly a year since I began this column, which is pretty wild to me. So much can change in a year – relationships, jobs, mindsets, direction and purpose. With each year that passes, you subconsciously begin to ask yourself the burning questions simmering below the surface of all of us. Am I happy? Am I fulfilled? Am I where I want to be, with who I want to be with, doing what I want to be doing?

When I started The Crawl, I was exactly where I wanted to be. I had weed-ed out people and places and things that weren't serving me anymore and was open to whatever the Universe had in store for me. I was enamored by Troy and all of its little quirks and I saw potential in the future I was building here.

Three years since moving here, it's safe to say I've been fully immersed

into the weird little bubble that is this town. Aside from some trips to the city and a few music festivals, I haven't really left it much, which can be... overwhelming (and not in a good way.) You start to see less of the magic and more of the chaotic crackhead energy that surrounds us, which is why it's helpful to get away for more than just a week-end trip every now and then. So, that's what I did this summer.

Following a frenzy of WTF events, I decided it was time. The walls were closing in around me and I needed out, I needed to breathe. Just something different for a bit. And while Texas and Oklahoma are certainly not a glorious trip out of the country, it is where my family is. Those who know me, know that I don't get to see them very often. Usually once every two or three years around the holidays, which isn't ideal, but as a military brat, it is what it is. You get used to it.

This month away made me realize that I don't want to get used to it anymore. I'm tired of being used to it. The thing is, when you're so accustomed to being so far from family, you tend to forget that they're getting older. You forget that your dad is a disabled Army veteran and it takes him a lot longer to get up and out of his chair than it used to. You forget that your mom used to have flowing red hair that's now turned to grey. You forget that the little

brother you helped raise when he was two is now starting the fifth grade and has a whole world of emotions, opinions, and personality bubbling inside of him. You forget the things that really matter and are most important.

During my month away, I was able to repair a very broken relationship with my older brother, who I really haven't talked to much at all my entire life. The very thing we avoided talking about all these years came to a head once we were face-to-face and it was impossible to avoid any longer. We yelled, we cried, we hugged, made up and were able to see each other for the people we are presently and put that baggage firmly in our past. On the night we hashed it all out, we laid on our backs in the grass and saw a shooting star together. I'd call that a good sign.

With that resolution, came the honor of meeting his daughter for the very first time. She's now nine and is full of so much sass, intellect and compassion that I can't believe I've missed out on nine years of getting to know my little, wonderful Lu. We pierced our ears together, got matching best friend necklaces and now Facetime almost daily.

I also saw my mom for the first time since our many months of silence and we didn't come to blows about religion – not even once. I spent a lot of one-on-one time with my sister, which

absolutely never happens between her husband and kids. In fact, I'm not sure it's happened since we were both kids ourselves.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that I forgot how important my family is to me and how much I missed them. Amidst the noise of the Troy bartender scene, gossip mill, crackheads, shootings and chaos, I forgot what peace felt like. It was the first time in a long time that I was able to hear that tiny voice inside of me that's been unintentionally silenced. It gave me the opportunity to re-center and focus on my priorities and what I want going forward.

If I keep going at the rate I'm going, I'll see my brother and niece maybe two or three more times before they graduate high school and my parents only a handful before they're retired and nearing their seventies. I'll miss out on all the moments in between the mundane and miss out on creating core memories that exist outside of holiday get togethers. So, although the time for me to leave this town has not quite come to fruition yet, it is certainly on the horizon. And no, it will not be to Texas or Oklahoma (who really wants to live there?), but it will be close. Think mountains. Lots and lots of mountains.



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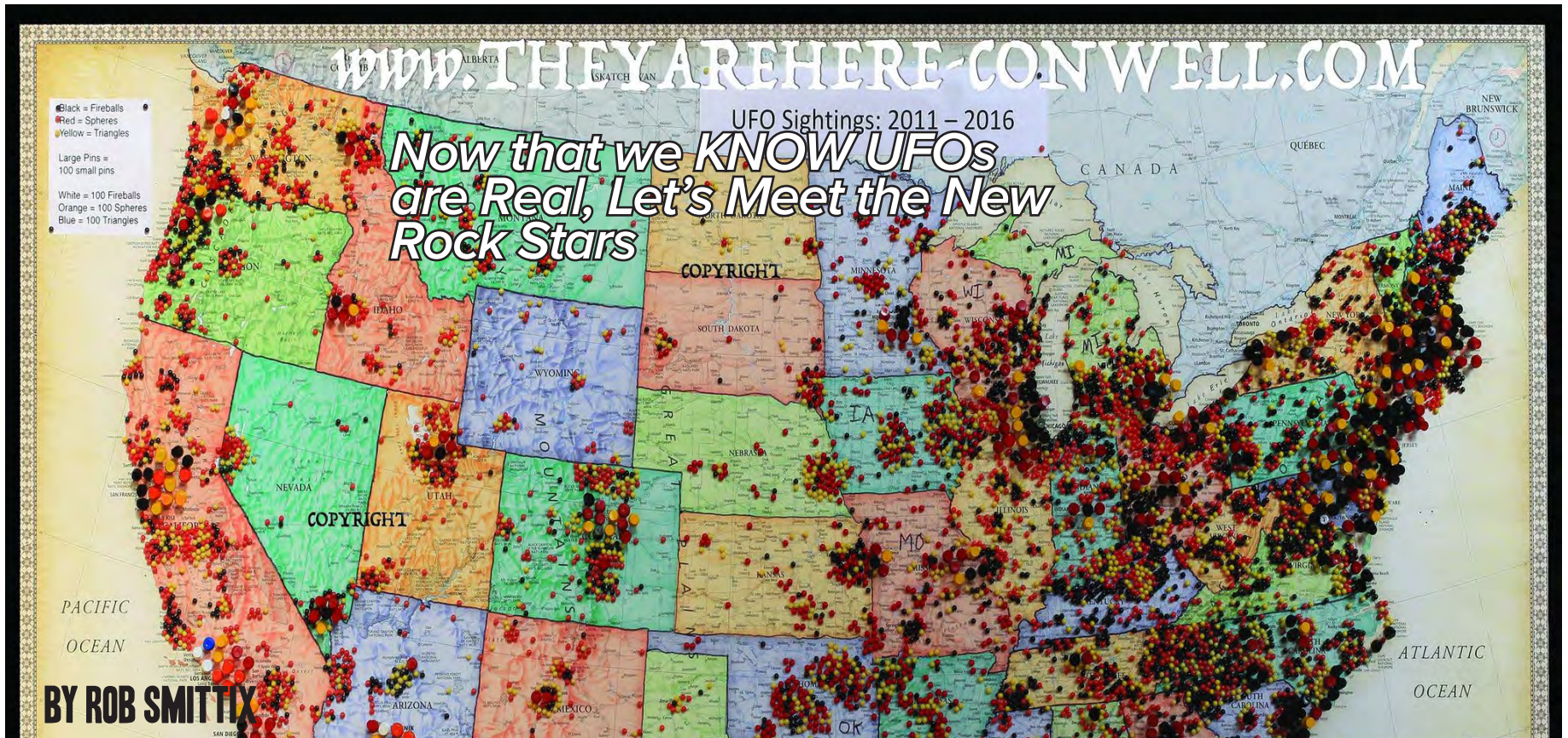
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# Tim & Tom Conwell



**RRX:** Thanks for meeting with me. You are father (Tom) and son (Tim) and you both have remarkable experiences in the realms of both the paranormal and UFOs, which I've been very interested in for a long time. Tim, what's your area of expertise?

**Tim:** I am more of the paranormal guy.

**RRX:** I've had more paranormal experiences than UFO sightings. Is there something that compelled you to get into this kind of study?

**Tim:** We've always been into what ifs and what could be. I have been known to be very sensitive to these things, even psychic wise. I have the ability to tell people things I don't know.

They would sit there and question, how do I know this? There are things I pick up on. I open my mouth but how do I know that?

**RRX:** No kidding. I think some people are sensitive to it.

**Tim:** When you're born, you're more in touch with it. We've all heard of little kids who have said things like: Uncle John is here or I was talking to my little friend but Uncle John has been deceased and no one is there. We all have the ability in the beginning but the hardest part is realizing it. Everyone has their own view, are you going to have it from the start and keep going? So, it all depends who can open up and when. Some people even those that are on TV are all of a sudden psychic. There

are fakes out there. I tell people that are going for readings don't say a word, don't speak, don't nod, give them a look of death because if they're psychic, let them do their job.

**RRX:** Well I know some psychics make it pretty clear it's for entertainment purposes only. I see that as a disclaimer because you know you're going in there and not getting anything out of it.

**Tim:** They want their money.

**RRX:** When I was a kid I had a dream that my grandfather died. I woke up to the phone ringing and I started crying, the call was to let us know that he passed.

**Tim:** That's someone reaching out to you and saying to be prepared.

**RRX:** We'll definitely get into the UFOs with you Tom in just a moment but I figured we could start here with Tim. So we touched on your psychic abilities but being the paranormal researcher that you are do you go out ghost hunting as well?

**Tim:** Oh yeah. I've got the equipment and we go out investigating.

**RRX:** Well keep me in mind for any upcoming adventures. Tom we haven't talked to you too much yet but you are a Ufologist and you're an author in the matter. How many books have you written?

**Tom:** Six books.

**RRX:** Right now I'm in your Living-room staring at a map of the United States with pins in it indicating UFO sightings



from 2011-2016. Tell us about this.

**Tom:** When I realized how many sightings were in each particular state I knew it would be a nightmare to keep track so I came up with the idea. When I finished my first book it was the East Coast and a couple of states. When I started the Central US, I knew that I was leaving too much information on the table by not having this in the first book. So I stopped at Ohio, that was my first state in the Central US and went back into my database and started assembling where the sightings happened to be in particular cities. Within the databases there were 50 types of things seen in the sky because of this I couldn't put 50 different colored pins in the map. I decided to combine certain things. I had spheres and circles, which are kind of the same thing, so I matched them together in the database. So those became the spheres and I made the pins a red color. Black happened to be fireballs. The first time I seen one was right out here.

**RRX:** Really?

**Tom:** Yes, there were nine of them, right up there in the sky. That's one reason I limited my time from 2011 because fire balls were being seen all over. I noticed that there were far more triangle UFO sightings in the desert South West and in the North West than there were in the East. Why is that? I thought that was a good one to put on the map to see if there was a correlation or something.

**RRX:** I never thought of it like that.

**Tom:** As I was putting pins in the map, I realized that there were tremendous amounts of certain types of sightings in certain places. Like spheres, fire balls and some triangles in the East Coast right along the ocean. I thought it was because that's where the populations were. As I started doing it I realized there were so many I had to change my pin types. If you look closely you can see bigger pins. The big pins are equal to 20 little pins. Out West were so

loaded with sightings that not only did I have larger pins to equal 20 small but I had pins of a different color to equal 100 small.

**RRX:** This is wild and they really do seem to hit the coasts the most on both sides of the country.

**Tom:** And they go around the great lakes. That's where I made my first correlation. If they were bases why would they have so many? Because they can travel from the East Cost to the West Coast in about two minutes. They wouldn't need that many bases so why are there so many sightings around water? Well several reasons, first of all at night when the sun goes down at sunset, you start seeing lights and if you stand there long enough the lights start moving. When I started seeing that I realized what they were doing was sort of collecting themselves around certain area and distributing from there. So it wasn't because of bases it just so happened to be the distribution center. A lot of comments on my theory about Lake Erie and Lake Michigan and many think that maybe there is a base. I didn't buy that, so why else would they be seen going into water? A reason that I stumbled on is that the ships are getting over-heated and there's no better way to dissipate heat than under water.

**RRX:** I never thought of that but as of late there's more talk of USOs (Unidentified Submerged Objects) coming out of water than ever. Now since everyone has a camera phone in their pocket do you think that we only have more evidence now because of this or do you think sightings have actually increased?

**Tom:** I believe the sightings have increased for two reasons, number one there's probably more and number two everyone is in tune to them now.

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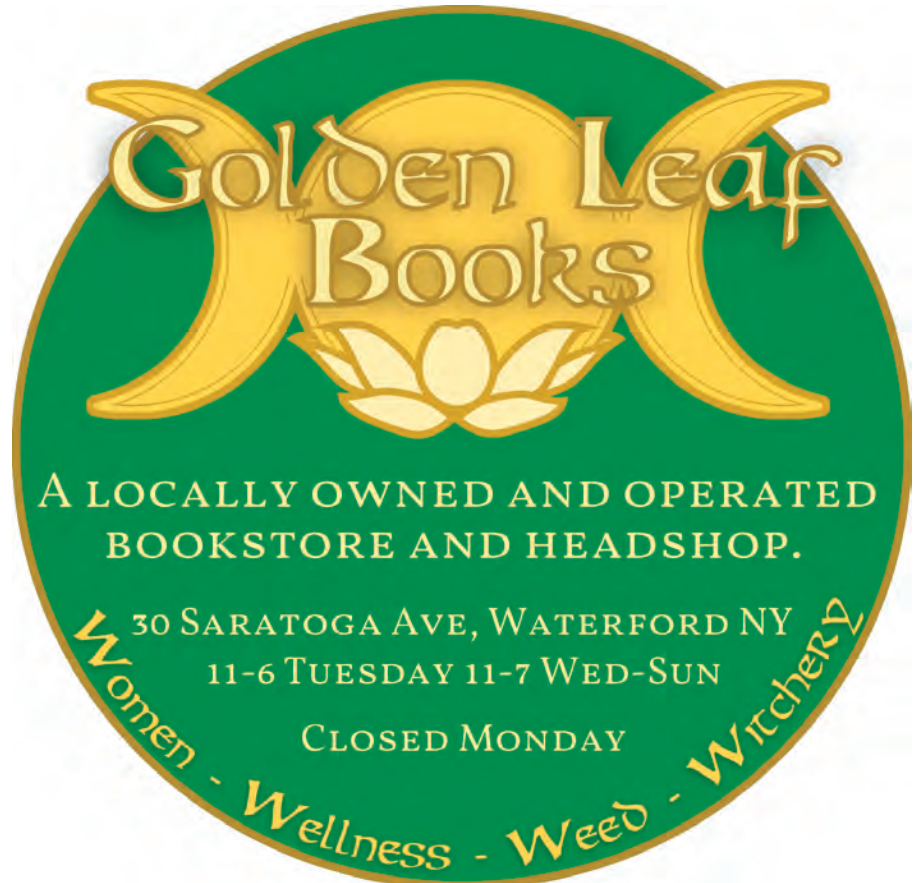


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# Joe Adee & The Lug Nuts

*Don't Call Them  
Americana...  
They'd Hate to  
Be Guilty*

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Joe Adee and the Lug Nuts

I reached out to Joe Adee from Joe Adee and the Lug Nuts. This is what he had to say. (Law and Order sound.)

**RRX:** The band plays everything from Americana to hard edge blues. Was that clear from the band's inception? Was there an overall vision for the band, or was it a matter of different people coming together with different backgrounds? If you had to play a show and they asked for only one style of music, which would y'all pick?

**JA:** Yes, for sure. I wanted that genre Americana for the basis of the band. The band's repertoire represents an evolution of the tunes comprising my solo act as well as songs I've performed in previous bands. My vision for the band was to play familiar songs I grew up loving, music by an eclectic mix of artists ranging from Johnny Cash to ZZ Top and Jimi Hendrix, Waylon Jennings to Led Zeppelin and The Doors, Hank Williams Jr. to Santana and The Allman Brothers. If I had to play one

style of music, I would play Americana music, because it's rooted.

**RRX:** I'm listening to your music on Youtube, and you all have a great range. And it's funny too. I imagine if I'm in the audience, I'm going to have a great time. How do you decide what songs to put in your repertoire? And what's the process of adding new material, is it easy? Any additions that were a struggle?

**JA:** How I pick the songs we play, basically if the song doesn't move me, we aren't doing it. It's completely a feel thing for me. Every show we play may include a different set of songs, based on the venue, the audience, the overall vibe. Generally, while planning for each gig, I'll consider new songs to add to that night's show. They might be a new original, a popular rock "chestnut", or a more obscure cover song I feel like playing. The band's talented rhythm section is able to support the tune on the fly, in real time, without rehearsal. That 100% why I love to play with my band mates,

Steve Barmash (Bass) and Phil Lanz (Drums). They are super talented, well seasoned musicians that I can literally throw any song at in the midst of battle on stage and they are right there 100%.

**RRX:** You say that you play "Old Country." I did an article recently about "outlaw country," Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and such. So I get the vibe of old country. But you said, 'old country' instead of just 'country.' Why did you think it was important to clarify that? What do you see as the difference between old and new here?

**JA:** I came of age in the 1980s and loved music, both country and rock. The country performers from the Grand Ole Opry and beyond were definitely influencers on the style of country music I perform today. That includes the classic country artists I grew up with such as Johnny Cash, Grandpa Jones, Waylon Jennings, Merl Haggard, David Allan Coe, Hank Williams Jr., Ray Charles, Charlie Daniels, Marshall Tucker, Alabama, George Jones, just to name a few.

That's not including all the Blues players that have influenced my playing abilities as well, that's a whole different list. I feel that it's important to say "Old Country" vs just Country because I'm not playing Jason Aldean, Blake Shelton, Luke Bryant. That's not what we do. We're doing the "Outlaw Country". This music is timeless and has passed the test of time. I'm an old soul at heart and these songs take me back to my youth and simple times. We also enjoy and play the a few songs by some talented modern country artists such as Chris Stapleton, Jamie Johnson and Jelly Roll. I listen to modern country, the lyrics are amazing, I do enjoy it. However, our bread and butter is the music of the older classic artists.

**RRX:** I figure deep in the interview would be the best time to talk origins here in Bizarro world. Joe Adee and the Lug Nuts is a three piece? Or is it a four piece? When, and how did it come together? I'm assuming that you all were in projects before this, any notable



projects or bands? And is everybody local, or are there any transplants?

**JA:** Joe Adee and The Lug Nuts is a 4-piece band, featuring myself Joe Adee on lead vocals, guitar, and harmonica, Sandy Adee (my wife) on percussion and backing vocals, Steve Barmash on bass guitar and backing vocals, and Phil Lanz on drums and backing vocals. The band formed in 2020, coming together and congealing just as the COVID pandemic hit. It was a natural by-product and evolution of my previous bands: The Joe Adee Band and Joe Adee and The Barnstormers. Sandy and I started the Lug Nuts and shortly thereafter Steve joined. He quickly brought in Phil, a drummer he had recently been playing with, to form a tight rhythm section. The band members were all raised and currently live in the greater Capital District, with the exception of Steve who was born and raised in Flushing, Queens.

I have been in a bunch of bands over my career including Gemini, Burnt Toast, Burgundy, Shotgun Blues Band, Night Owls, Winds of Change, Crossfire and The Barnstormers, just to name a few. All were a mix of rock, blues, country, and originals.

Steve Barmash was with The Impalas, The Nomads, The Kix Band, The A La Cart Band, Take 5, E Town Express just to name a few. Steve toured the east coast the summer 1978 with "The A LA Cart Show Band". Steve also toured 1979-1980 with "The Nomads". Steve started to work for NY State, he had to scale back on gigs, but still was in many bands along the way.

Early 90's Phil was a founding member of El Extreme, this band was fronted by the one and only, Luis Chalusian, focused on original salsa/Latina and highly percussive grooves and melodies. Phil toured with Chubby Checker in 1996 as his back up drummer and road crew. Phil was with the Dugan's in the early to mid 90's... with Howard Glassman. He toured and recorded all

around the northeast from Erie Pennsylvania to Boston Mass. To NYC. Phil also 1995/96 played in a guitar riff driven band called "Mercy Twin" who wrote very good original material and an alternative groove band called "500 Hats" 1991 (still together after 30+ years). Both bands focused on all original material. I also was on a few of their original recordings. Phil doubles as our sound engineer for live performances.

Sandy, Joe's wife has been working with Joe in/with bands for almost 30 years. Sandy has recorded and promoted all of Joe's Albums. Sandy designed the website, and all promotional materials. Sandy is our engineer for the recording sessions, as well as videographer for all videos. Sandy also handles all bookings, social media and promotions.

**RRX:** The band is really tight, just hand in glove. It's the mark of veterans. There are a lot of people in bands who read this magazine every month that are always trying to build their chops musically. I think an exploration of technique is beyond the scope here, but any "good practices" for getting better as a player?

**JA:** We try to play and jam with as many different players as possible over our careers. Always say "yes" to an opportunity. You will learn new songs, new arrangements, and will meet new players with different styles. It's also proven helpful to play different instruments. I was a music instructor for 26 years. Teaching guitar, bass, drums, harmonica, and vocals. I've had students over the years that have gone off to either form their own bands or teach music themselves. I'm always watching YouTube and studying other players. Constantly learning new things through trial and error too. Steve enjoys playing piano and acoustic guitar on his own time. This helps broaden his music horizons as well.

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# Pete Mason NYS Music

*He Covers the Music Scene in New York State, and in the Process, Covers New Ground.*

BY LIAM SWEENEY

Pete Mason. Photo Provided.

**W**e reached out to Pete Mason of NYS Music and had a productive chat.

RRX: Let's talk about NYS Music, which is where I know you from. I'll share with you that, where I live, without giving out the deets, there are NYS Music stickers in places where no sticker ought to be. And I know that was more likely fans put them there than you. So NYS Music is "sticker popular." Can you tell us a little bit about it?

PM: Well, it has been fun slapping stickers all around the state, as well as sending stickers around the state and fans and readers putting them wherever. When I covered the Reeperbahn Festival in Hamburg, Germany last September, I had stickers with me but never expected SO many walls and

signs full of stickers. The logo is easy to identify and is always a great low-key form of advertising and grassroots marketing.

RRX: Doing a publication of any sort about the music scene in New York is challenging. New York, whether upstate or downstate, has a great variety of music. In fact, just that we have an "upstate" and "downstate" brings us an interesting dynamic. Which would you say is harder to cover, downstate or upstate, and why?

PM: I don't see much of a difference between how hard it is to cover the various regions of the state, whether it be Western New York, the Hudson Valley, Upstate, the North Country, or the greater NYC Metro area. There is a great deal of music in every region

throughout the year, and the number of summer concert series and festivals has returned to pre-pandemic levels, and then some. Perhaps New York City is the tougher simply because there are SO many places to see music in the five boroughs, and there is always something to see, leading to tough calls of what show to catch/cover on a given night.

RRX: You are a teacher in the world of alter-egos, and you've written children's books. The novelist in me is curious about the children's books. "Counting Down the Number Line," with illustrator Ryan Kerrigan, is your fourth. It might seem easy to write a children's book, words wise, but are there challenges reaching a young reader?

PM: Children's books are easy in a sense - at least at first when you've got a draft written and think 'Oh the kids will love this!' Then you have to factor in childhood literacy skills, the font size, how the artwork will align with the text. Each book gets a little more complicated in the sense that Easter eggs are added, more musical connections can be tied in (3 of my children's books are Phish or Grateful Dead themed, with another one on the way, inspired by the music of Widespread Panic). As long as I can reach a parent or grandparent who loves the music, I find the kids will enjoy it as well, with the enthusiasm relayed to the child via the adult reading to them. That is something that can support early childhood literacy, as well as reading



to a child twice a day.

RRX: You promote PhanArt shows, which, when I first read it, made me think of just concerts and PhanArt was just a moniker, but these are different. It seems like the moniker is not a moniker, but a description of fan art. So having been to a few art shows, I have to ask you how do you make it something more than a walk-through for people?

PM: PhanArt is another way to refer to the art made by fans (phans) of Phish. In 2009 I published a book highlighting over 1600 pieces of art - shirts, posters, stickers, tattoos, etc. that were made by Phish fans between 1992 and 2004. In 2013 I began hosting PhanArt shows, making sure the event allowed fans to meet and interact with artists, making the artists and their art the star of the pre-show, making it easier for fans to pick up fan made art, which had always had greater appeal among Phish fans than

official merchandise - compared to any other fanbase. Keeping the shows consistently focused on the art, with music taking a secondary role (typically with music curated by Sweeping Views), allows for an event that many fans schedule their pre-show plans around and brings the community together.

RRX: So you're a part of the Mockingbird Foundation, a non-profit that raises money to support music education through a competitive grant process. What do you do with them? Do you help them raise money, or are you more involved with the actual education aspect? And what can people do to get involved with the foundation?

PM: I am a director for the Mockingbird Foundation which supports music education across the country, and in the cities Phish performs in each year. I got involved in 2004 when I started the PhanArt Book, and in 2021 I was invited to join the Board. Currently I work to develop

merchandise and assist with marketing of the site, encouraging fans to support music education and inspire the next generation of musicians. It is among the greatest causes I have been a part of.

RRX: Another interesting, and good, thing you're involved with is Groovesafe, which aims to address unwanted touching and sexual assaults at concerts. This is something that is supported from within the music community. I can only imagine how much of a problem this is. What can venues do to stop or tackle this?

PM: As an official partner with GrooveSafe, we support their mission of building consent culture. We help them spread their message and raise funds through our various events. I can't comment directly on their behalf, but we see the powerful work they're doing and how it benefits our community. That being said, venues have an inherent responsibility to protect their

patrons. GrooveSafe has developed a venue safety training program specifically geared towards educating venue employees to support patrons by properly responding to issues on this topic. It all comes back to raising collective awareness and unifying as a community to be more aware of the issues fans may face.

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

PM: The Capital District is home to an incredible amount of music history, dating back more than 200 years, and constantly being written by the new bands that make the area so thriving. Statewide, New York has the best music scenes in the country and that is what NYS Music strives to bring to our audience - a look at the past, present, and future of music in the Empire State, every day.



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# The Heights

BY JOE BARNA

I was introduced to this phrase by a good friend many years ago. Although I was able to intellectualize the meaning behind the words it took quite a bit of soul searching and self-reflection to fully encapsulate the depth of what it means to be prepared.

Let me explain...

When an individual sets goals there lies ahead a series of steps one can take to achieve those goals. For example, if you wish to lose weight then your daily caloric intake must be altered to fit your goals. When consuming a variety of foods you must be aware of how those foods affect your state of mind and body. Physical exercise must be engaged regularly and more consistently. All of these steps can be easily put into motion. The goal will eventually be achieved, affording you a happier healthier life.

BUT... Hold on just a second.

In setting these goals did you consider illness, financial pressures, relationship stress, exhaustion, family problems, job demands, injury and even lack of long-term motivation? Well, buckle up baby, you're in for one hell of a ride.

Life doesn't care about your goals, feelings, how much wealth you've accumulated, what dreams you may have or what you feel entitled to obtain. However, what life does offer is the opportunity to overcome that which you may feel is shackling you from achieving your intended goals. This is where the saying "Opportunity Favors the Prepared Mind" comes into play.

Walk with me...Let's discuss.

Over the years I've faced tremendous obstacles that could have sent my

life into an ominous tailspin. Physical injuries, financial ruin, loss of gigs due to a poor attitude, failed relationships, family turmoil, homelessness, moments of depression, anxiety and much more. We all know I'm not unique in facing these types of conflicts. But, how we choose to approach resolving these circumstances can vary quite dramatically. It's about being well informed and making the right decisions to set ourselves up on a path towards a successful future. That's where true preparation and opportunity will present themselves.

Preparing for what potential opportunities await you means more than having the desire to obtain them or simply writing out a plan. There are questions that one might also wish to address if to fully realize the goals they are setting forth.

Have you settled that dispute in your relationship?

Are you physically healthy enough to take on certain tasks?

Have you worked on your mental toughness in an attempt to overcome those conflicts that upset you in your day-to-day life?

Have you talked to anyone about the anxiety you're struggling with to help calm your soul and get you back on a path towards success with renewed confidence?

Most importantly, do you love yourself and who or where you currently are in life?

What's my point???

There are no shortcuts along this journey. If you wish to participate in collecting the rewards afforded to those

who are truly prepared, then you MUST get your life in order. Preparation is as much your intentions and ability to resolve interpersonal turmoil as it is executing a plan. Achieving one's goals also comes from organizing one's thoughts, surroundings, and relationships. If we wish to truly embrace growth, enroute to achievement, then we must also obligate ourselves to a healthy life physically, mentally and spiritually. There are people, substances and unresolved issues that are toxic for our hearts and minds. They stunt our capability to prepare for what's coming and imprison our consciousness, not allowing room for that which may offer "opportunity".

By the way, if you're getting the impression that I'm implying this road to developing a "prepared mind" is easy you couldn't be more astray. I struggle a little every day to keep moving forward, making better decisions, and preparing for that which may create a favorable moment for me to improve upon the quality of my existence. But, if you choose a life of purpose, have the courage to face your emotional demons, surround yourself with those who genuinely care for your wellbeing and live honestly then you also set into motion opportunities for achievement with far less resistance.

Having a prepared mind, at least from my perspective, means letting go of that which binds our hearts and minds. This creates the necessary space to gather those things we truly wish to acquire. It means taking control of our lives and weeding the gardens that exist deep inside each and every one of our souls. The fact is, if you allow the weeds

(the negatives) to overtake the garden then eventually they will drain the nutrients from the soil, killing off the beautiful flowers (the positives) that were never given the chance to bloom. This can mean stepping away from a poisonous relationship, quitting that habit that's toxifying the body or simply just putting an end to exhausting ourselves thinking about things that we inevitably have little to no control over. In general, we as a species spend too much of our energy thinking about how other people's lives could be improved and not enough time on improving our own situations. It isn't selfish to focus on elevating one's own situation. In fact, by doing so you just might inspire someone else to be proactive in making the choice to improve the quality of their own life.

In closing.....

For those who are taking the time to read this I wish you a life filled with joy, stability and opportunity. The road is long, winding and at times treacherous. It comes with failure, mistakes, heartache, disappointment, loss, disgust, anger, sadness, betrayal, adversity and at times loneliness.

However, for those brave enough to continue the journey, life also offers love, happiness, success, kindness, compassion, spiritual wealth, joy, laughter, a good meal and a warm hug. Get prepared, stay the course and live an inspired life.

Warmest Regards,

Joe



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# Natty Frenchy The Skatalites

*A Man of Years for a Band of Decades*

BY ROB SMITTIX

Natty French. Photo provided.

**T**he Skatalites have been one of the most influential ska groups of all time. The group was formed in 1964 and began as a ska group but also embraced subgenres such as Rocksteady, Reggae, 2tone, Third Wave, Ska-Jazz, Ska-Punk, Ragga, and Dub. The Skatalites have been called Jamaica's Greatest Band and if you've had a chance to see them over the last six decades, you can easily understand why that is. I am overwhelmed with excitement that I had

the opportunity at Albany's Alive at 5 on July 20th to speak with guitarist Aurelien Metsch aka Natty Frenchy of The Skatalites. Here is our conversation.

**RRX:** We are here with Natty Frenchy of the Skatalites at Alive at Five. There were a lot of people yelling Frenchy in the crowd. Thank you for coming here and playing for us.

**NF:** Thanks for having us, it was a pleasure to be here to play the ska, reggae and rock steady for the people.

**RRX:** Definitely! So you joined the band in 2009?

**NF:** Yes.

**RRX:** The band has been around since 1964 or something like that?

**NF:** That's right.

**RRX:** That's crazy, I wasn't born yet, and I don't think you were either.

**NF:** No. (Laughs).

**RRX:** 2009 is still a long time to have been in the group.

**NF:** Oh yeah, it's been fourteen years.

**RRX:** What has the experience been like for you?

**NF:** Beautiful. I'm honored to play with the original Skatalites. The first time I played with the Skatalites I got goosebumps. Lloyd Knibb was the drummer, I mean c'mon. We also had Lester Sterling it was incredible.

**RRX:** You guys just came off a two-month European tour?

**NF:** More like a month and a week or so.

**RRX:** After this show are you tak-



ing a break or anything for a little bit?

**NF:** We won't have anything until next month but it's okay, we're getting ready for the 60-year anniversary next year.

**RRX:** Wow, isn't that something?

**NF:** We've got work to do.

**RRX:** You do. What do you guys do in your downtime when you have time off?

**NF:** Family and children time for me, you know? I have to take care of the youths and then production, music and studio. Also we're working on the project for the 60th anniversary.

**RRX:** 60 years! Wow man, not a lot of bands get to say that.

**NF:** Unfortunately, we don't have any more originals. Lester Sterling passed away a couple of months ago. His burial was last Tuesday. Rest in peace Lester. Doreen Shaffer is still around but not touring with us right now. But hopefully, Doreen, wherever you are, we love you.

**RRX:** You've been playing with Larry too, right?

**NF:** Larry McDonald couldn't make it today but it's a joy to have Larry, he joined the band a couple of years ago. Beautiful, legendary Larry always has a good vibe.

**RRX:** Now a lot of people don't know the difference between ska and reggae. They can't tell the difference. How would you describe the difference?

**NF:** Ska is different from reggae the tempo is different. The message is a little bit different in reggae too.

**RRX:** Then you've got rock steady in there too.

**NF:** It's in between.

**RRX:** It's like in between, yeah.

**NF:** The change between ska, rock-steady to reggae and even with dance-hall you can hear Skatalites.

**RRX:** Yes you can.

**NF:** Earlier the DJ was playing Stephen Marley doing a Skatalites tune.

Doo Doo Doo Doo, Doo, Doo, Doo, Doo... Yeah, Skatalites!

**RRX:** Oh yeah! I'm a big Stephen Marley fan too. Stephen came to town a few years back and I was very excited to see him perform. He played all Bob Marley songs, which was a crowd pleaser for sure, but I actually wanted to hear Stephen play more of his own material. I think of Bob Marley and how we lost him. The cancer was discovered under his toenail. I know it was part of his Rastafarian faith, so he refused to have his toe amputated as advised by doctors but... I always thought someone from the hierarchy within the Rastafarian culture, should have given Bob a pass. He was a national treasure, and he could've been around longer, spreading his message of love through music.

**NF:** Everybody has their choices, you know?

**RRX:** But he stuck to his guns and his beliefs, you've got to respect that.

So, when you travel can you bring your weed with you?

**NF:** (Laughs) Weed is everywhere all over the world we find it. It's just a matter of time, some governments still frown on it.

**RRX:** Weed is everywhere, go ahead support your local weed dealer, don't always give your money to the dispensaries because that's just giving money to the government. But do support my friends at Stage One in Rensselaer.

(Both Laugh)

**RRX:** Any words of peace or wisdom for our friends out there?

**NF:** It's all about love, you know what I mean? It's about music, we keep the tradition going with the Skatalite music! Despite politics, we are here doing the work. Rastafari, the message is love. Come together and let's do some work! Bless.

**RRX:** Thank you for your time, Frenchy everyone!



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# Tugboat Roundup: James Turecamo

In 1850, the latest in a long line of 13-year-old boys began a job as a “hoggee” – leading mules towing barges along the Erie Canal. His name was Michael Moran, son of a 61-year-old unemployed stonemason who had recently emigrated from Ireland with his family, settling along the Canal in upstate New York’s Herkimer County. After these humble beginnings, a few years later, Michael became a boat owner himself, beginning a career as a shipper of goods along the Erie Canal. Not long afterwards, Michael’s gaze turned south, toward New York Harbor, and a brighter future. At the age of 27, Michael rented a desk in a lower Manhattan tavern, marking the beginning of Moran Towing.

In 1899, John E. Matton opened a small shipyard on the mule-drawn era Champlain Canal in Waterford. He built and repaired wooden barges that were still being towed through the canals of New York State by animals and lately (increasingly) small, steam-powered tugboats. But in 1903 the New York State Legislature followed the instructions of then-Governor Theodore Roosevelt just a few years earlier who had declared “The present canal must be enlarged!” That year the Barge Canal Act passed, which would construct an entirely new State Canal System (the 3rd full iteration of the waterway) which would accommodate barges pushed and towed exclusively by tugboats, not animals. Knowing his business would soon be located on an abandoned waterway, Matton looked nearby for a suitable location to expand, and construct a facility which could service the new waterway. He found such a place just to the south on Van

Schaick Island in Cohoes. In 1916, the John E. Matton Barge Plant, later John E. Matton & Son, opened in Cohoes New York, hard by the junction of the Champlain & Erie branches of the new Barge Canal, which would open in its entirety in 1918.

In 1892, a young (8-year-old) Bartholdi Turecamo emigrated from Isola Lipari – described in a 1998 Baltimore Sun article as a flyspeck island between the northern coast of Sicily and the toe of the boot of – Italy with his family. In 1900, as a 16-year-old, he embarked on a career in the construction business, which would become Turecamo Coastal and Harbor Towing Corporation, ultimately one of the largest marine towing companies on the east coast. Two sons, Bart Turecamo and Bart Turecamo, Jr., would go on to lead the firm.

How these great men, and their lives and their legacies, would take decades to intersect and intertwine, but they would. The story of this enduring connection can be told in the context of the 2023 Waterford Tugboat Roundup’s Tug of the Year: James Turecamo.

If Waterford was (and is) a tugboat town, and its waterways its “Main Street”, then invariably Matton Shipyard was the anchor store of the business district. Municipal boundaries don’t mean much to boatmen; what is typically an obstacle to be got across (or a municipal boundary itself) is their workplace. As such, whether Matton Shipyard was in Waterford, Saratoga County or Cohoes, Albany County meant no difference...it was here.

And so, after over two decades of celebrating working vessels which

have plied New York waters for decades, storied in their own right, each distinctive in a different way, we celebrate a tugboat which began her life in this very spot, at Matton Shipyard. And in so doing, we also recognize the enduring legacy of the Matton, Moran, and Turecamo families.

After a half-century of operation at the Cohoes location, and after the passing of John E. Matton’s son, Ralph, the Matton Shipyard was sold to Bart Turecamo. It was said that Turecamo appreciated the traditional methods employed by craftsmen at the shipyard, and these practices continued during his ownership, with care and quality the hallmarks of the operation. From the time Turecamo purchased the shipyard in 1966 and its closing 40 years ago in 1983, Turecamo built nine commercial tugs and four launches for the New York City Police Department. One of those tugs was the James Turecamo.

“Canallers” hold a special place in the hearts of tug fans and Tugboat Roundup attendees. The graceful lines of these low-slung behemoths harken back to an earlier time of shipbuilding, with the crest of the low, unassuming pilothouse just peeking slightly over the rest of the superstructure. Since the 1950s, though, these canallers have been equipped with telescoping pilot-houses which rise up to see over a barge ahead – like a preying mantis poised for the strike – and then slink back down to earth to clear the low bridges of the Canal. A whole generation of similar tugs built for New York’s canals and contiguous waterways have had one thing in common in addition to this general appearance: a single wheel.

These single-screw boats may not be generally as maneuverable as their twin-screw counterparts – but on the canal that drawback took a back seat to the inherent risk of wheels (propellers) fouling on the armored banks of the narrow canal, especially near bends. The benefit of just a single, center wheel was that it was, necessarily, farther from the bank at all times than either wheel would be on a twin-screw boat. So canallers were built as single screw boats, and that was it.

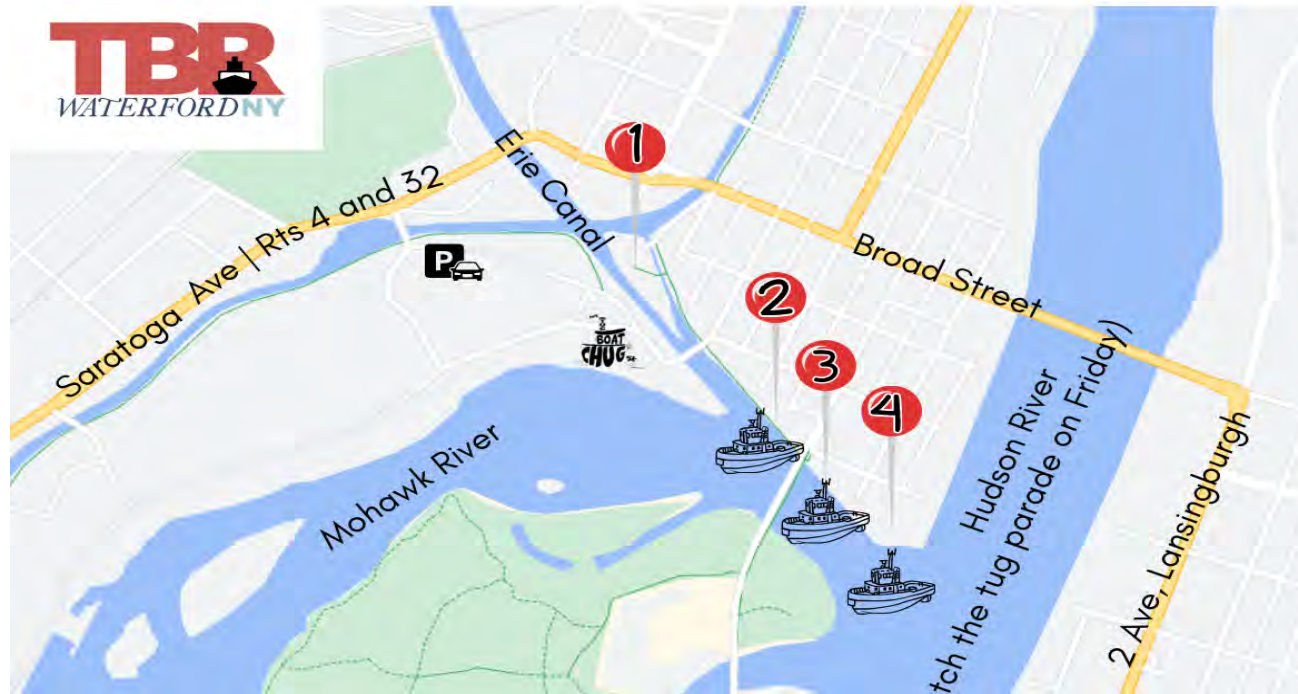
In 1969, a brand-new boat slid down the ways at the Turecamo-run Matton Shipyard. She was a canaller. Built to Turecamo’s exacting specifications, by Matton’s skilled craftsmen, appropriately festooned and adorned in the trademark “woodgrain” paint scheme for which Turecamo boats were known – she was the quintessential canaller through and through in every respect save one...the James Turecamo had two wheels.

This twin-screw canaller went right to work on New York’s waters and became a ubiquitous sight in New York Harbor, but not terribly much on the Canal System. As a twin-screw boat she was ideal for many jobs but the narrow canal wasn’t one of them. Still, as one of the last canallers built at the Cohoes yard, she bridged the gap between a generation of traditional canallers and the larger, ocean-going tugs which would be built over the next nearly decade and a half, slipping through the outstretched and raised arms of the 112th Street lift bridge enroute deeper waters, and higher bridges.

In 1998, as the James Turecamo continued to push, pull, prod and



Tugboat Roundup takes place along a quarter mile of the Erie Canal and at Lock E2 Park. Hurst Harbor Center, 1 Tugboat Alley is at the heart of the festival. Parking is limited in this area. A satellite parking lot is available (22 Burton Ave, Waterford, NY 12188) . A trolley to the festival is available from the parking lot to the festival (Saturday and Sunday only). It is short walk from the parking lot to the festival. If you choose to find a parking spot closer to the festival, please note that this is a residential area and be respectful of homes and driveways.



**1: Lock 2**

- Farmers market
- Fire safety obstacle course
- Kids' activities
- Boat rides

**2: Harbor Center**

- Vendors
- Music
- Mini tugs and other vessels
- Line toss competition
- Tug Talks

**3: Canal Wall**

- Vendors
- Tugboats

**4: Battery**

- Fireboat John J Harvey



cajole barges and ships of all shapes and sizes, the company Michael Moran had envisioned along the towpaths of the Erie Canal, and formed in a New York City barroom, was thriving. The Moran Towing Corporation had become not just one of the largest marine towing companies on the east coast, or even in the country, but globally. That year, they grew just a little bit larger, with the acquisition of the Turecamo Coastal and Harbor Towing

Corporation and (by extension) the venerable James Turecamo.

Like the Matton family, the Morans had moved from Mules to Tugboats, and had built a legacy which endures today. The addition of the Turecamo fleet grew the business and the company's overall capabilities but also, importantly, reconnected these stories of immigration, family, enterprise, and success.

This year, as we celebrate the 40th

anniversary of the closing of Matton Shipyard under Turecamo ownership, we also celebrate the rich tradition of boat building and tugboating that is the very foundation of this annual event. And pay tribute to these three amazing families whose stories have woven together over a century and a half to bring the James Turecamo home to her birthplace.

**JAMES TURECAMO**  
USCG Doc. No.: 523580  
Vessel Service: TOWING VESSEL  
Year Built: 1969  
Ship Builder: MATTON SHIP-  
YARD COMPANY  
Hull Number: 338  
Length: 92.4 feet  
Hull Depth: 12 feet  
Hull Breadth: 27 feet  
Gross Tonnage: 225  
Net Tonnage: 153





**W**e reached out to Colin from the band Wet Specimens. I had questions, and he had answers.

**RRX:** Your demo is great, raw, and I usually don't see demos on Bandcamp. Was there a particular reason you put the demo on Bandcamp, considering how much you've done since then? And can you tell us just a smidge about how the demo was recorded? Studio? Home studio? Microphone in a garage?

**C:** Initially we put it up just to give

people an idea of what we had cooking up in the laboratory because all of us were coming from bands that were active, defunct, or soon to be defunct, so we wanted to show what we were working on and also get word out to friends in other places. It's mostly on Bandcamp still because it hasn't occurred to any of us that it may not be the best representation of the band anymore and also that I'd wager we all forgot that it's still up. You were on the money with it being a single mic recording in a dingy space – all the instruments

were recorded live at the old practice space and vocals came later on in my basement after some (very loose) mixing.

**RRX:** You've come a long way since the demo in 2018. It feels like 2018 was two years ago, but it's been five. Maybe I'm just getting old and it's dog years. Our station started in 2018, the magazine the beginning of the next year. Aside from certain global events best left in the past, what kind of trip has it been?

**C:** Man, said global event definitely

boosted the volume on my time blindness because I feel the same way. It's not until I get thinking about what we've done that I realize we've been at it for a fair amount of time at this point, let alone the things we all did in bands previously. All of us have gigged pretty extensively, so we were fortunate enough to have friends in a lot of places that helped us do a lot of cool stuff. This summer we got to play a show with '80s Finnish punk band Appendix at one of the funnest punk fests in the USA, and that's so sick. I mean playing



in a band kinda sucks because it drains your health, your time, and your bank account but what's the alternative? Not doing cool stuff? That sucks way more. We'd all probably lose our minds.

**RRX:** Going from the demo to your latest album, "Over Pale Bodies," the recording quality has definitely improved, and the band is much tighter, but you can still feel that original groove. And I noticed that the vocals lay back just a little bit, which bumps out the music. Is that intentional?

**C:** We definitely refined our sound working with Will at Dead Air Studios, who Dan and I worked with a handful of times with Neutron Rats. That dude is a wizard in the studio and nothing short of a delight any time we see him. He heard the demo, listened to our word vomit description of how we wanted to sound, and somehow got some really flattering recordings out of us for the Haunted Flesh and Serpent Circle EPs. It was a no-brainer to come back to him for the LP, and he really helped to bring the vision to life. The quieter vocals were definitely intentional, I always considered singing to be just another instrument and being level in the mix helps with that, and it lends to a dark and cavernous vibe which helps with that hopeless and desperate tone.

**RRX:** I've seen you called punk, in particular, "Not Your Daddy's Punk Band," but my dad listened to Clapton, so what do I know? But I hear metal in your sound as much as punk. Do you consider yourselves a punk band, a metal band, or something different, cruising down the street bashing the mailboxes of both punk and metal?

**C:** As far as the neighborhoods of punk and metal go, we try not to s\*\*t where we sleep but we may have thrown up on a few lawns trying to walk home. We are definitely a punk band at our core, that's always been our home, but we all have pretty eclectic taste and try to take influence from

other genres when appropriate. Most of us are metal dudes too because a lot of that abrasive and nasty s\*\*t goes hand-in-grubby-hand so that finds its way into our music, but we dip into the poisoned well of classic death rock/goth just as much. This new LP musically has influences ranging from Rudimentary Peni to Judas Priest to Christian Death and it's both fun and a challenge for us stooges to blend that together and make it sound coherent.

**RRX:** I like to ask bands questions about other bands that they think need a boost up. We're a community, and we support each other. It also tells me who I should be getting a hold of next. Do you know a local band, any genre, particularly a new band, that you think should get more recognition than they do?

**C:** This is not an easy question to answer because this area does not get enough credit for the amount of creative and talented bands and musicians across all genres. I'm not sure if it's that we are always going to be in the shadow of NYC, or because people can have a pessimistic view of the Capital Region, but I am consistently stoked on the cool s\*\*t that comes out of the area. I'll try to stick with some newer/ish bands that we are fond of: Unknown Liberty, Schenectavoidz, Ice Queen, Stutter, Cheap Heat, Cinnamon, Architrave, Grand Street, Nite Office, Wrasp, the list goes on and on. I know I've left some off but it's impossible not to with how lively s\*\*t has gotten around here.

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

**C:** Our LP came out officially August 25th and we had a killer show at No Fun with our chums in School Drugs from New Jersey, and Leaking Head from Rochester along with local support.



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# Liar, Liar - The Ultimate One-Hit Wonder

BY JOHNNY MYSTERY

It's sometime in 1965 and an eight-year-old kid is making his First Communion. It's a big thing. You get gifts. I'm that kid and I'm about to get something that will open up the world to my young ears. No more will my contact to rock n roll be restricted to just the car radio or Shindig on Thursday night. It's about to get serious. I open up the top of a shiny little box to find my first transistor radio!!! This is a momentous occasion, not only getting the gift but for what I hear when I first turn it on.

It seemed like forever, walking the two blocks or so to my house. I was wanting to run home, but the rest of my family just had to talk to everybody on the way back. We knew all the people in the neighborhood. It was different times. Finally, we're home and instead of joining the party, I install the 9-volt battery in this little box with a one-inch speaker and out comes the coolest song I had ever heard up to that time. I'm already familiar with the British Invasion, just like all the other kids but this was different. The creepy Munsters like organ sounded like a roller rink from a horror movie. There were screams. There was a reverb drenched guitar line, following the keyboard line. There was a falsetto vocal singing, "Liar, Liar pants on fire, your nose is longer than a telephone wire." It was my first encounter with "Liar, Liar" by The Castaways.

The Castaways came from some far-off land called Minneapolis. In those times, the Minneapolis/St. Paul area played host to hundreds of bands

and enjoyed a thriving scene. Forming in 1963, Bob Folschow on guitar, Dick Roby on bass and Dennis Craswell on drums, set out to conquer the teen clubs and frat party scene with a good deal of success. Like all the other area groups, they played the pop songs of the day but the thing that would set them apart from everybody else would happen when they took on an organist. Enter James Donna....

As James tells it, he was hanging around the house, noodling with the family Wurlitzer when he came up with the riff and chord progression for Liar, Liar and Dennis Craswell shows up and starts helping with the lyrics. It took about two hours and suddenly they got a new tune. The other members loved it and when they started playing it live, the crowd ate it up. It wasn't long before they got busy in a recording studio. The big label in town was Soma Records and they convinced them to release it. Liar went straight to number one in the Twin Cities and thanks to Soma's distribution and promotion, it went nationwide in a very short time, climbing to number 12 on the Billboard charts! Soma Records also produced another Top 40 around the same time with "Run, Run, Run", by another local group called The Gestures. That record is also worth checking out.

Soon they found themselves on tour and television. The Castaways went from pizza parlors and teen dances to playing 10,000 seat venues and opening up for The Beach Boys, Sonny and Cher and The Loving Spoonful, just to



name a few. The business almost never works like that today but back then, YIKES! Talk about a whirlwind experience. They even found themselves performing "Liar, Liar" in the beach movie, "It's A Bikini World." Watch for it on TV, late.... If this whole thing sounds like the Tom Hanks film, "That Thing You Do", it's probably no coincidence.

Their follow up record, "Good-Bye Babe" was something of a flop. I personally don't blame them for it not being a hit, because it really was a good song as was the flip side, "A Man's Gotta Be A Man." The public is fickle but "Liar, Liar" is a hard record to follow. Lenny Kaye included it on the "Nuggets" compilation in 1972 and called it a perfect record. It really is. Clocking in at 1:52, it was one of those go-to records for coming in and out of the top or bottom of the hour on radio. DJs loved it.

As so often happened with bands in the 60's, the draft and getting married, broke up The Castaways. Drummer Dennis Craswell did end up in a group called Crow, who had a substantial hit with "Evil Woman Don't Play Your Games with Me", which was also cov-

ered by Black Sabbath.

Years go by and Liar gets a second life, being used in films such as "Good Morning, Vietnam", "Lock Stock And Two Smoking Barrels" and was also covered by Debbie Harry in the Movie "Married To The Mob." As a result, the band, with James Donna has reformed somewhat and continues to perform in and around the Twin Cities area today. They are even available for private parties. Imagine getting these guys to play at your birthday! James has also recently published a book called, "Liar, Liar, From Garage Band to Rock Stars... The Story of Minneapolis Band The Castaways." The boys were also inducted into the Iowa Rock Hall of Fame in the early 2000s.

It's also interesting to note that it took another 20 years for Minneapolis to produce another national act to the record buying public. You've all heard of Prince, right? To think it all started with that little two-minute song.

Ok guys, you know what to do. Hit the record shops!



# Naomi Bindman

*A Mother Carries  
Her Daughter With  
Her in Song*

BY SETH CASALE

Naomi Bindman and Ellen.  
Photo Provided.

I first met Naomi Bindman at a small open mic in Troy. As soon as she told her story, I felt as if an ice pick had been driven through my heart. Naomi had tragically lost her daughter, Ellen, the week after she graduated from high school in a car crash. As a father myself, I began to wonder how I could react to such a loss. I was taken by the strength as Naomi played songs penned by her daughter in the years before her passing. Moreso than that I realized, that while I had expected a stoic under a mantle of grief, Naomi was a triumphant celebrant of her daughter's life using her music to keep Ellen's legacy alive.

**RRX:** So tell me about yourself.

**NB:** I'm at a point now where I'm

playing Ellen's music. After she was killed in 2009, my whole life just stopped. I had lost my mother as a child, and Ellen's dad had died when she was a child, and the one thing that made any sense to me had any meaning was her music. I found myself being pulled to her guitar and I began trying to plunk my way through her songs, because of the connection that I felt with her, not wanting to lose that. Most of her songs were not recorded, she had made a Demo CD with a dozen or so, so all the melodies were in her head. I tried to preserve them, I had the idea that someone might want to record them, someone who could really sing could record them. Eventually, I ended up playing one of her songs at a memorial for a

young man who had also died in a crash.

**RRX:** And that was your first time playing one of her songs out? Were you already a musician at that time, or a poet?

**NB:** I was a teacher, I was a writer but not really a published writer. Yes, and I was terrified, my voice really thin, but I was doing it to honor her and to honor him, so it wasn't about me, and I got through it. After that, the sound manager at the time of Caffe Lena invited me to come play there. I thought that it was not my dream; that was her dream. But I did it.

**RRX:** So it didn't start out overtly to do what you're doing now?

**NB:** Not at all, it was simply to remember the melodies to pass on.

**RRX:** So you had only intended to keep in touch with the creative side of her?

**NB:** Right, there was no intention that I would sing the songs. I hoped to find someone with a good voice who would sing and record her music. But through this series of events I thought maybe if I want people to hear the songs, I should sing them myself. That's led to a number of things, and I'm gratified when people hear the songs. When I share my losses, people often share theirs, it gives us a way to talk about it, and I didn't see that coming.

**RRX:** I think if you're in a spot dealing with grief and you haven't figured out how to move through, hearing someone else's story can really help.



**NB:** Exactly, and we're so grief illiterate in this culture, so much of how people deal with emotion is to avoid it in different ways rather than leaning in to the pain which is what I did. I ended up recording a CD with Freddy Shadde whom I met at Caffe Lena who said "You should let me record your music and I'll play with you." It feels like the doors have opened as I meet the right people at the right times. I think that's a bit of irony there.

**RRX:** Not a pleasant one but I see it.

**NB:** We did a CD release show at Caffe Lena where I didn't play at all, as I said it wasn't my passion, not my dream and I don't like being on stage. I had to learn how to perform, and the first year was really about learning a lot of stagecraft. To act relaxed when I'm really not, that's when they all say, "Fake it till you make it". We're our own worst critics, but eventually, I started to trust people and performed. I started performing in 2011, then I went on a little road trip

down south, and out west. I performed to do the songs justice, to not f\*\*k it up. She had a gorgeous voice, and I will never sound like that, but I've learned to embrace my own voice. After the show with Freddy, a Skidmore student approached me and asked if she could do a documentary about my story for her class, and that led to someone in LA seeing it. He asked if I'd like to make a longer film, not necessarily a documentary but true to the story. We've been working since 2016 and I think he really gets my story.

**RRX:** So it's still in development, ongoing?

**NB:** Yes, active development they call it. He's highly respectful of the nuances of my story. In addition to the work on the movie, I've written a memoir, and am in the process of seeking an agent and publishing. For agents and publishers, it's about salability, so I have to find the right person who will identify with it and champion it.

**RRX:** Going back to your poetry, it's clear you process grief through the poetry that I had read. I would like to share a passage I found profound from your poem "Lament"

"The newly spotted fawn's tiny foot-two pointed toes unmarred by stone or stumble-Severed at the ankle rests pristine on bloodless snow."

Can you talk about that?

**NB:** That was something I saw on a walk.

**RRX:** So it was literal? I was thinking of some allegory or parallel to your own pain.

**NB:** There is the metaphor for the mother, which I am, and I think it ends with "Is she grieving like me?"

**RRX:** Powerful stuff. Can you talk to me about what your intention is for the culmination of these projects?

**NB:** My goal is to honor Ellen every day in whatever I'm doing, whether it's writing or singing her songs. There are these various projects that will

ultimately come to fruition. When I see my book on a shelf or my movie in the theater, it will be amazing...and she will still be gone. and I have to live with that, and what do I do each day and how do I be a human who is carrying on her spirit in a very general sense. And that's really my goal. I would love to find musicians here locally to perform her songs for another CD. I'm also writing another book about my mom, Ellen, who she was named after.

**RRX:** How can people reach you?

**NB:** My website, naomibindman.com has contact info and show listings. I have a show coming up on October 15, and my friend who is a percussion goddess is coming from Maine to play with me, I don't know if we will play two 45-minute sets or one longer set.

**RRX:** Thank you for your time and for sharing your story, I admire your strength and ambition so much.

**NB** thank you for reaching out.



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# Violence



*“Who is one of the fastest rising bands in 518 metal?” Violence IS the answer.*

BY JAMES MULLEN

Violence, Photo Provided.

**G**LENS FALLS - You may have heard before the old adage “Violence is not the answer”, and perhaps there are a lot of cases where this might be good advice. However, in this particular case we’re not talking about that blow-hard who stole your favorite parking spot or the person at the show who gave you that sideways glance... we’re talking about the kind of hard-hitting, gritty, heavy metal that has that

in-your-face slap-you-silly sort of vibe to it. While I’m far from an expert on the genre and all of its subdivisions, I know heavy metal when I hear it and I can assure you this is it! With releases going back to 2020’s album “Chug Life” and their 2022 single “Welcome to the Neighborhood”, Violence is not exactly brand new to the 518 metal scene. Comprised of Ryan Chandler on vocals, Aaron Lawson and Stephen Paige on

guitars, Logan LaPoint on bass, and Eddie Elbows on drums, they’ve been through a journey to get where they are now which included a slight lineup adjustment and making appearances on some of the best heavy metal shows that the capital region has to offer a habit. They’ve put on shows alongside some other local favorites like Downswing, Oakheart, Urine, and many more. So as it turns out, if the question you’re asking is

“Who is one of the fastest rising bands in 518 metal?”, Violence IS indeed the answer. I caught up with the band to talk about their journey in local music, where they may go next and of course their upcoming EP release plans.

**RRX:** Tell us about yourself! How did the band get started, and how did the current lineup come together?

**V:** The band is a tight-knit group of dads that came together for their love



of crushing dad rock! Eddie (drums) and Dana (ex-guitarist) started as just a jam project when they decided it needed to become more than just a joke band. Chan (Ryan Chandler, punk rock vox) and Logan (he just plays bass) came into the picture to create the first iteration of Violence. Life got busy and Dana decided to part ways. That's when Aaron and Stephen (guitars) joined forces with us and became the lineup you see today. In the end, we're just a group of hot dads out here trying to have the best time we can.

**RRX:** I first saw you play live at GEM Fest 2022 last summer, and your stage presence really blew me away and had me banging my head for the entire set. I've seen you playing a lot of awesome line ups at Empire Underground as well; is there a particular show that sticks out as your favorite over the past year?

**V:** This is a trick question because all of our shows hold special spots in our hearts, but we can narrow it down to two shows. We played a show last Christmas with a local band called Downswing. Holiday vibes! The pure joy and adrenaline from not only the crowd, but we felt as a whole it was one of our best performances at the time. The show went off without a hitch and a lot of money was raised for kids in need. Shout out to Mike Valente, he has done an immense amount for the community and the local music scene.

Another show we just recently played was with our good friends in Johnny Booth. They just put out a record, "Moments Elsewhere". We have gotten the pleasure to share the stage with these dudes several times and it has been a blast every time. This show in particular was one of our first times playing with in-ear monitors and playing several new songs we had never showcased. With how excited everyone was to play, nothing could have brought us down and it didn't. We played one of the best sets we have ever played to

one of the biggest crowds we have played to. All said and done, it went better than we could have expected.

**RRX:** You've put out 2 new singles in 2023 with "Lifeline" and "Warning Signs", respectively; are there any plans for a full release or more singles this year?

**V:** BIG THINGS COMING SOON! We have one more single to wrap up this EP called "Heavy Hitter". We have a release date set for September 1st. This song will have a special feature that we will keep a surprise. From here we have a mountain of riffs ready for release starting at the end of this year!

**RRX:** "Warning Signs" also featured a guest spot from Downswing's Harrison Seanor, which was awesome! Do you have a list of other artists you'd like to collaborate with?

**V:** Given we all have our favorite vocalists and many to choose from, I think we can nail down a few; one coming from another local band called Concrete, Lenny Fletcher. He's been around the music scene block a time or two. He's a long time friend of many of us and has crushing vocals that we feel could compliment our style of music.

Some bigger names we would love to someday work with would include Chad Ruhlig (For the Fallen Dreams), Lochie Keogh (Alpha Wolf), Sean Paul, and Keith Buckley (formerly Every Time I Die, The Damned Things).

**RRX:** Plug what you've got coming up, when are your next shows and releases?

**V:** Currently we are working on our next ep that we hope to start releasing at the end of the year. Our final song of the current EP "Life Sentence" is set to release September 1st. As for shows we have one coming up with a bunch of great friends from around the Albany area; it is not announced yet, but be on the lookout for it! We intend to come into the new year with some heat and show you what these hot dads are all about!

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# Left of the Dial Music Critics

BY MIKE STAMPALIA

**W**hat is this s\*\*t?" That's the opening line of a very famous Greil Marcus review of Bob Dylan's 1970 double album, *Self Portrait*. It still cracks me up every time I read it.

What's sometimes forgotten is that the review as a whole is pretty exhaustive and quite nuanced. It has many other gems buried in there ("The Boxer" gets critiqued as "Jesus is it awful"), but it is not solely negative. What it is, however, is an excellent piece of writing.

I like music critics. The good ones anyway. I love music, but there's only so much I can see and hear myself. Good critics expand my reach and my knowledge – who's up-and-coming, who's coming apart at the seams, whom do I need to see the next time they're in town, and who's phoning it in. I follow my favorite critics religiously.

Good critics are exceedingly rare, but bad ones are legion, here as anywhere. What makes a bad critic? There are so many ways to suck:

- The "Boilerplate": Same review, every time. "If you haven't had a chance to see these guys yet, I suggest you do. They're playing next in Burlington on Saturday..." Yawn.
- The "I'm Only Doing This to Get in Free": 100 words or less of nothing. Just send a photographer, a blurb is worthless.
- The "I Like to Beat Up on Local Bands": Why? Just, why?
- The "Every Show and Record is AWESOME": If everything's great, then nothing is.
- The "I'll Describe It, But I Won't

Critique It": Describes everything in painstaking detail, yet you still don't know if they liked it.

- The "Just an Excuse to Name Drop": Shoehorns in some reference to when they smoked weed with Foghat at the Skyway in '83, even though it has nothing to do with anything.
- The "I'm the Singer's Girlfriend, but Let's Pretend This is an Unbiased Review"

The list goes on and on.

But what makes a good critic?

A good critic is knowledgeable. They know a lot about their subject matter, and they do their homework. They understand that nothing – no artist, album, or show – exists in a vacuum, and they know how to connect it to the bigger picture. Music is art, and art is, fundamentally, life. They do not lose sight of that.

A good critic can write. They don't have to be a stodgy, formally-trained English teacher (see Greil Marcus, above). But they know how to put words together in a compelling way. They think about what they're going to write, and they spend some time doing it. They have a "voice." I can identify my favorite critics' writing even if it's unsigned.

They love music, full stop. They respect the musicians that earn it (the great majority), they call out the musicians that don't, and they treat their subjects seriously. This last point bears repeating. If you do not treat your subject matter seriously, then you don't get to complain when nobody takes your review, or you as a critic, seriously.

A good critic should have situational awareness. Reviewing Guns 'N Roses at SPAC is a different animal than reviewing Miko Marks at Caffe Lena, and neither approach is appropriate for reviewing, say, Under the Den at the Fuze Box. This point seems lost on a good number of critics, who approach their craft with a blunt, one-size-fits-all approach.

National acts that play to thousands of people are, by definition, newsworthy. Irrespective of the act, if a lot of people paid a lot of money to see them, someone should be asking whether it was actually any good. Because many times, the answer is no. The role of the critic here should be to strip away all the hype, all the nostalgia, all the pressure (because fans of these acts will be brutal to you) and tease out whether or not it was actually good. The band doesn't need your review and won't read it. The fans have already made up their mind - you aren't swaying any of them, either. You are writing for posterity's sake, and history will eventually decide if you got it right or wrong.

Mid-level acts are where critics really earn their keep. These are musicians playing to dozens or perhaps hundreds of people and tend to be either rising

stars or established acts somewhat past their halcyon days. A review here is of interest to both the artist (it may get quoted and promoted) and the audience (readers are actually open to influence as to whether the act is worth seeing). A critic has to be ruthlessly fair here – if everything you write is a rave, you forfeit all influence as a writer. But if you get it right, this is where you can make your reputation.

Local bands. In my opinion, nobody should publish a negative review of a local band. A critic's role on the local scene should be one of discovery. I see a lot of local bands – many are terrific, some are awful. So I write about the terrific ones. Obscurity is already a big enough challenge for local bands, they don't need some blowhard going out of his way to tear them down. When a local band gets big enough to start touring, let the critics in the other towns weigh in. We should take care of our own.

As a critic, you won't always be liked, and you certainly won't always be agreed with. But if you're respectful, you just might get respected.

Now, what is this s\*\*t?

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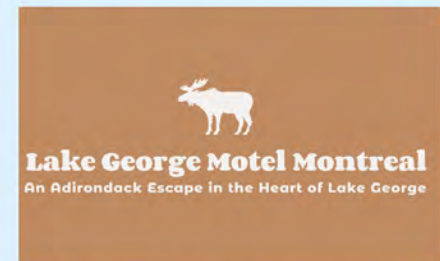
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# Observations and Ramblings from a Cranky Old Guy

BY JEFF SPAULDING

**C**onfession time. I am a Geek, a Dork, a hopeless Fan Boy, and if my parents were still alive, I'd still be living in their basement. To quote The Shat, I've been told that I need to "Get a Life."

Aside from music, not too cookie cutter and vanilla, and radio, when its good, comic books are my thing. Not as dorky as Comic Book Guy on The Simpsons but we could be twins. I'll share with you a recent experience in the Nutmeg State, first some background on my obsession.

I started collecting in the early 1960's. I was a DC fan, Superman, Batman, etc. Then I heard about this new company called Marvel. It was different, new, wow. I had to start buying and reading them all.

In my collection:

Fantastic Four #1, Amazing Fantasy #15 (first Spider Man), The Incredible Hulk #1, Tales to Astonish #27 (first Ant Man). Journey Into Mystery #83 (first Thor), Tales of Suspense #39 (first Iron Man), Uncanny X-Men #1, Avengers #1, Strange Takes # 119 (first Doctor Strange), Daredevil #1, Fantastic Four #52 (first Black Panther), Avengers #4 (return of Captain America)

When I started collecting it cost a dime, then twelve cents for most of my growing up years. Today I could easily buy Art Fredette out of his little dog and pony show with what these babies are worth. That was a great collection I had.

Yes, I said had. In 1974, after high

school and a move to Buckeye State, my mother did what most moms did back then without knowing how deep the knife was they put in their child's back. She threw them all out. Not sold. Not Traded. Threw out. The act set the stage for the heart attack I had later in life. That said, my life changed as a young college boy. I discovered alcohol, dope and women, not always in that order. Comics were still cool, but my disposable income was spent on other things, like alcohol, dope and women.

In the early 90's, for some reason I got the fever to start collecting again, not just new books but titles I had back in the day. With my OCD, I was on a mission. It didn't matter about the condition of the book, I truly didn't care about the value, but the pure enjoyment of the stories and art. I hit every place in town like a drunk on a bender, I knew there was next to no way I could get the first edition books I had, I was working in radio, after all, making less than a WalMart greeter, but reprints would do fine. Today I have a collection of books in 15-20 long boxes, totes, and post office crates (if you work for the Postal Service, ignore that last line please). Family and friends hated it when we moved, as one box alone could turn you into Christopher Reeve in an instant (hey, I'm talking Super-Heroes so the reference works).

Fast forward to a couple weeks ago. My oldest grandson and one of his friends traveled with me to Mohegan Sun for something called Terifficon, a

three-day geek-fest. Grandson #1 and Friend are big Funko Pop collectors, they made out like bandits, plus picking up lots of other goodies along the way. Me? I wasn't going for comics directly, but I picked up some cool classic Mad Magazines, and some old Teen Fan books (my wife would love them) with The Beatles, The Osmonds, etc. I also went there for some celebrity Meet and Greets. I had a lot of them I wanted to see but the waiting line was nuts, so I focused on my primary target,

Jonathan Frakes, Will Riker himself, a very cool guy. I also got my picture with the robot from the 60's Lost in Space show too. The kids had a great time, as this was their first convention. My legacy will live on.

Speaking of which, in my will I am giving my comic book collection to all three grands. There may be a big fight over who gets what, but I don't care, that's on purpose.... hey, a grandpa can be a dick too you know.

Be hearing you.

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# SOUND + VISION

# MUSIC AT THE MOVIES

**ROCK 'N' ROLL HIGH SCHOOL - SEP. 5**



# The Prog Digest

BY KLYDE KADIDDLEHUMPER

**W**hen sitcoms were sitcoms, Happy Days was mega popular. It was not on my personal list most of the time, but I get it. You know, good old-fashioned American values TV (wonder what that would look like today, but I digress).

We love Henry Winkler, he is, by account, a wonderful man and also very talented. I wonder what was going through his head when he became a party to one of the great bad ideas ever and the reason for the phrase – Jump the Shark.

This is not about that (2 part) episode, but the phrase. And while this may not have been the thought going through the minds of the bands presented here, it is, certainly the end result. What the heck happens to bands. The ones who stick to their guns are usually reviled by some, even though they evolve and have a great deal of variations in their work.

No - this is about a few examples here, and more I am certain you can think of.

Let's start with one that started with such massive prospect and became a power ballad hit making machine. Journey. I mean, come on. Original members of the band included Gregg Rollie and Neal Schon, from the Santana Band, and, interestingly, Prairie Prince, drummer for The Tubes and Todd Rundgren and replaced early on by Aynsley Dunbar from Bowie and The Mothers. The first 3 albums, "Journey," "Look Into The Future" and "Next" were really

good. Sales were ok – but – Columbia Records basically threatened to drop them, so they added a lead singer who did not work out. Then, they were introduced to Steve Perry. While he has a nice voice, it was pretty much the point at which the band jumped the shark.

Yech.

How about The Chicago Transit Authority (shortened to Chicago after the real transit authority took offense) a rock band with horns. And with Terry Kath – they brought it. Up through Chicago XI, you had hits, sure, but they were always a force. The recordings were crisp, the horns tight and Kath was blistering. It always feels as though the heart of the band was ripped out when Kath dies of an accidental gun shot. Oddly, we have Doc Severinsen to thank for the band continuing – a good friend of the band, he told them they ought to continue – and they listened. Yup – the band leader for Johnny Carson kept 'm going. Funny how things work. I have a soft spot in my heart for Chicago, found it interesting that Bill Champlin was a member for a number of years (Son's of Champlin is still a favourite for me). But, it was a downward spiral in terms of edge, and the only album that has made a difference since then is The Stone of Sisyphus (Chicago XXXII). Recorded in 1993, it was not released after a reorg of their record label (there go the suits again) and finally saw the real light of day 15 years later. It is a serious throwback to the



original focus of the band – check it out. Otherwise – shark bait since Kath's passing.

Chicago also brought us REO Speedwagon (yup – it was a car... ). Started in '67, early records rocked. By the time they got to "You Can Tune A Piano But You Can't Tuna Fish," the writing was on the wall. "Nine Lives" is the last of the seriously rocking REO. Once again, it was the business that made things go to the pop

success. The manner in which the band did business, with 2 of the members getting a larger slice of the pie (a new corporate structure) looks to be the first nail. What a shame.

Our Fearless Leader, Art Fredette, has it right. Music is too important to be left to the suits. Yup – look out for the sharkskin suits. They will certainly bite you in the arse.

Until next time.

Klyde





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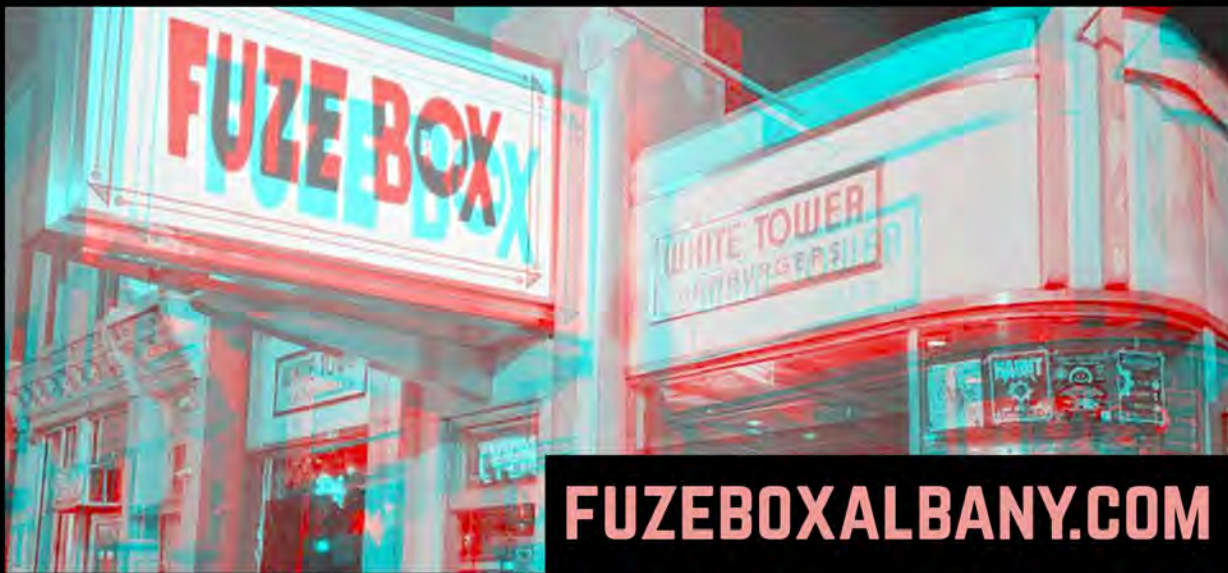
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