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Waves

Volume 26
Issue 1
January 2016

**IDLEWHEEL
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SAM HOOPER/MIKE NULL
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BEST IN THE BLUES 2015
CLUB LISTINGS
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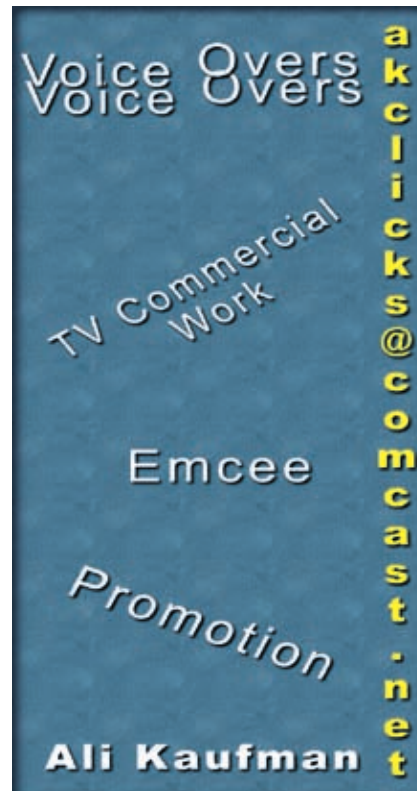
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Sound Waves

January 2016
VOLUME 26, NUMBER 1

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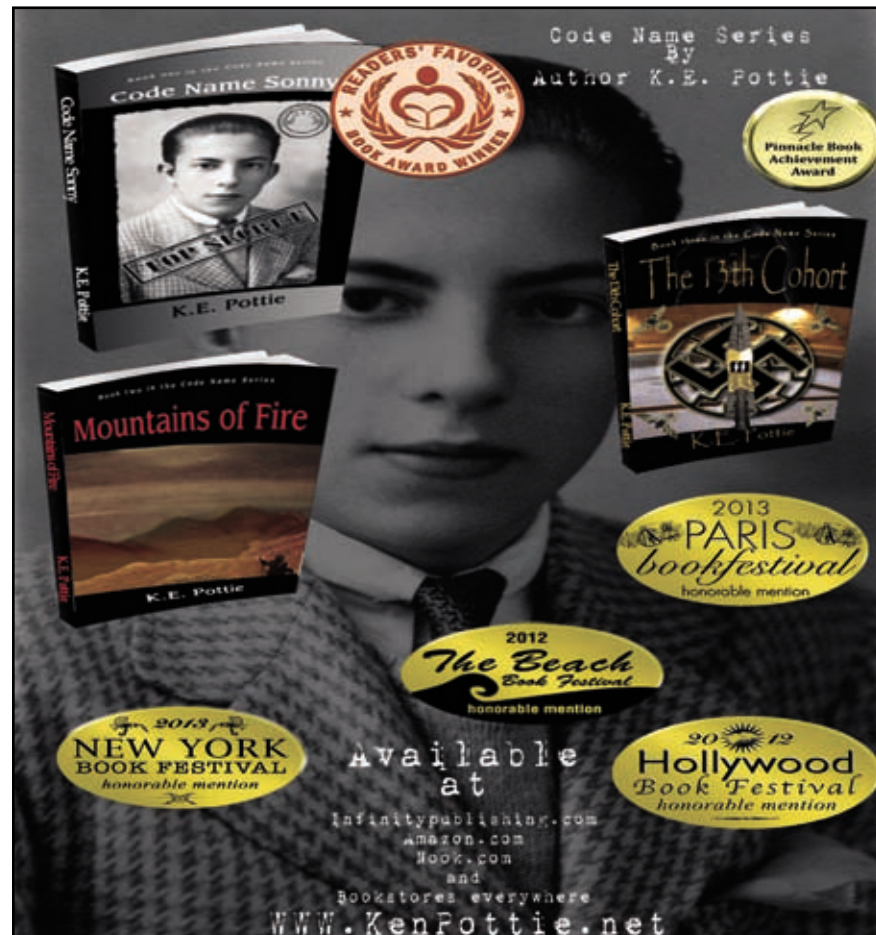
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SOUND WAVES is a
monthly publication
Send all inquires,
editorial submissions &
subscription request to

SOUND WAVES
MAGAZINE
P.O. Box 710
Old Mystic, CT 06372

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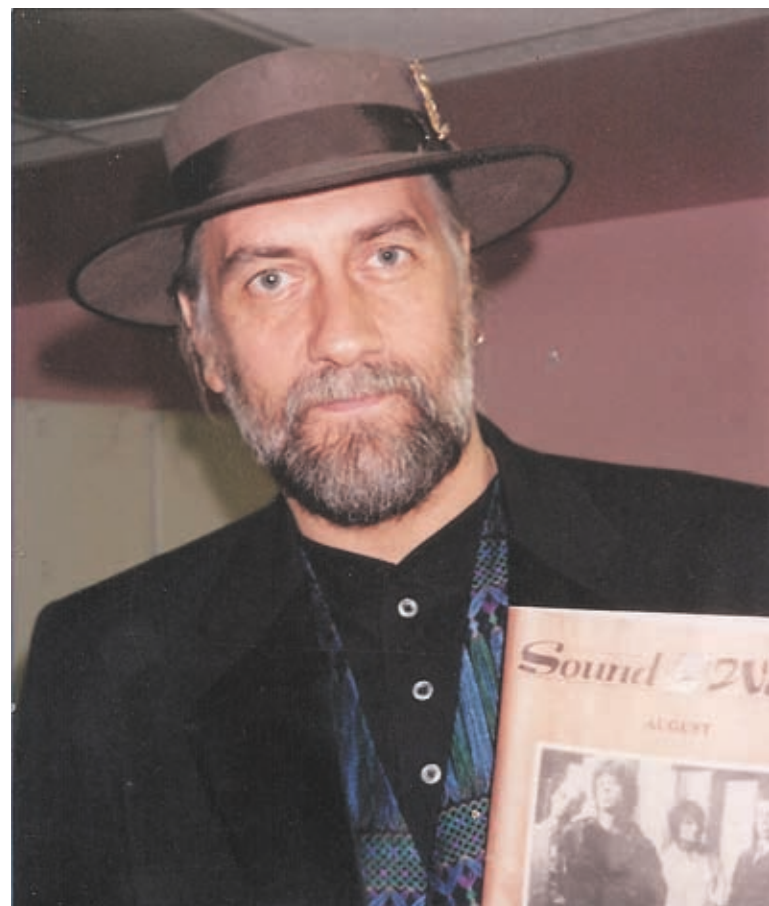
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MUSIC NOTES



“The Sirens Were Going All Night:” Fulfilling the Musical Promise of Freedom

By Mark T. Gould

*“I don’t understand the world today
I don’t understand what I’m supposed
to say*

What can we do to make it better?”

Jason Domnarski forgot about the concert.

Amid the ultra-busy schedule of his family life, musical career, teaching, and writing, he just forgot about it.

So, he didn’t go.

The concert was in Paris. At the Bataclan Theatre. The headliner was Eagles of Death Metal. The night was November 13, 2015. We know, unfortunately, how it ended.

Domnarski, like many others Parisians, is still coming to grips with the horror of that night, when 90 concertgoers were slaughtered during a terrorist attack on the city. However, as a musician and an instructor of young Parisian students, he is striving to find the goodness and the hope among the horror and the sadness.

*“Doesn’t matter if you’re black or white
Doesn’t matter if you’re wrong or right
Doesn’t matter if you’re not the same as me”*

“One of my students and his father invited me and one of our teachers to the show a few weeks before. They were very excited about seeing the band,” the 34-year-old Essex, Connecticut native told me in an interview. “My teacher and I were also interested in going, but I think we just forgot about it, and never ended up getting tickets.”

Domnarski, who plays keyboards, guitar and drums, leads his own trio that has released several well-received albums. However, he arguably leaves his greatest mark as a teacher of young, aspiring musicians, through his Park Slope Rock School, which he started in Brooklyn in 2008 and expanded to Paris, where he lives with his family, in 2011.

“Being a musician in the current industry requires you to be constantly self-promoting, and it can be very tiring and can sometimes leave you feeling very narcissistic,” Domnarski said. “The moment I started working with kids and saw that I could really make an impact on their musical development and appreciation, I was hooked.

“To introduce kids to David Bowie, or help them express their emotions through original songwriting...it’s a very special and rewarding experience.”

He was teaching on November 13.

“On the night of the attacks, the student (who had asked me about going to the concert) attended his class and left early to go to the concert,” he remembered. “When we were seeing the events unfold at the Bataclan, we were incredibly anxious. The father called me that night to tell me he and his son had escaped unharmed, but what they witnessed was truly horrific.”

After the class, Domnarski went home and watched a movie.

“Strangely enough, I first found out about (the attacks) from my dad, who texted me from the U.S.,” he said. “About 30 seconds after receiving my dad’s text, my phone started ringing off the hook and we quickly started following the news.

“It was a very surreal night. Everyone knew something terrible was happening, but there were still so many unknowns. The proximity was very unnerving (the Bataclan is a 15- minute walk from our apartment), and the sirens were going all night. It happened quite late in the evening as well, so we were up until about 3 a.m. following the news, and obviously didn’t get much sleep after that.”

The question then was how he would react, both personally and professionally, to the attacks.

“To be honest, I haven’t written anything since the attacks, which is rare for me since I spend several days a week writing,” Domnarski said. “I’ve felt a bit numb, anxious, upset. It’s gotten better over time but I’ve felt no inspiration to play my own music.

“I wish I could say the opposite, that I ran down to my studio and started channeling all of these emotions into the world’s best song, but no. Creating art, whatever the medium, requires a lot of emotional energy and I didn’t have much of that to spare for a while. It took me a couple of weeks to touch the piano again and when I did, I just played through a simple Bach prelude.”

Yet, amid the chaos and emotional upheaval, Domnarski did what, frankly, we all need to do to combat extremists.

He went back to work, nurturing and teaching creativity to his young students, not far from where the attacks took place.

“Immediately following the events, we cancelled classes and when we resumed, we still had a few parents who were reluctant to allow their children to travel to class alone,” he said. “But, our parent and student communities have showed incredible resolve and camaraderie. We are all aware that we were directly affected by the attacks. given that we work in the music industry, which was an obvious target.

“Our student body is remaining positive, and some of our students have decided to devote their original song to the attacks (each band must write one original song per semester),” he said. “As a teacher, it’s the first time I’ve had to confront issues of violence, racism and hatred in our student songs, so it’s been a learning process for me as well.

“How do we write about such difficult themes? How can the music and the lyric decisions reflect both sadness and hope? The kids are doing a phenomenal job, and we’re very proud to offer this outlet for them. Now, more than ever, we feel motivated to fulfill our mission to bring rock music and the spirit of freedom that it represents to the next generation.

The italicized words accompanying this column are quoted from the lyrics some of Domnarski’s students, ages 12 and 13, wrote as a result of his teaching and encouragement.



*"Peace and Liberty is all we want
It's time to stop the wars and get along
Peace and Liberty is all we want
It's time to start a new life with this song."*

In a world increasingly more dangerous and hateful, it is encouraging that we still have sensitive and thoughtful people like Domnarski and his musical students to remind us of what is truly important amid the chaos in our world.



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LOCAL BEAT



Daphne Lee Martin Impresses Listeners With Mythical New Album

By Andrew Kerbs

Of all Connecticut singer-songwriters, none is more eclectic and sensitive than Daphne Lee Martin, whose new album *Fall On Your Sword* features her signature string

and horn arrangements which nicely compliment her singing and tuneful strumming of guitar. Having played and performed in CT/RI for years, Daphne's mythical new album speaks about the reality of love, not just the blissful aspects of relationships she sung about on her previous albums.

Eskimo Bro opens the album with a sultry saxophone and slowly builds into a thick hollow-sounding guitar riff with morbid lyrics. The allusion to a woman's funeral begs the question of what her old lovers might think as they gather to meet each other before lowering her into the ground. On a more optimistic note, *Id Take a Bullet for You* is about unconditional love between 2 sleeping lovers with passion like a drug coursing through their blood. However, the best things about Daphne's music are the animalistic themes of sex and fertility symbolized by the lyrics about birds bees and flowers in her songs. This is not the first time Daphne has sung of birds bees and honey.

The reprisal of the bee theme on Daphne's new album *Fall On Your Sword* speaks selfless thrift more than it does sexual indulgence typical of Frost. *More Flies with Honey* was one the more erotic songs on the otherwise subtle romantic themes of Lee-Martin's last album. This song hit you straight in the heart with every whisper and nuance of Lee-Martin's voice: "Let no drop go to waste . . . I'll drink you by the case." The allusion to honey "sticking to the sides of your glass" gave this romantic song a raw, visceral quality that revealed the sheer joy and sweetness of a good relationship. On the new album however, Daphne reins in her urges and emphasizes the need for her man to be a good saver. Lee-Martin explains how the wise bee makes more honey than he needs when taming her queen (bee) on *St. Ambrose Kills his Darlings*. This cut showcases Daphne's sweet, trebly voice and slow jazz accompaniment before the song shifts to a major key for an organ crescendo which closes it out. This classic song stresses the importance of a thrifty mate who is a good provider.

The bee theme also makes its way into songs where flowers symbolize women and bees men. "Beautiful to see her once she opens to the day . . . but blossoms only sweetest once the bee has had his way" symbolizes how a woman's inner (or outer) beauty is complimented or enhanced by the presence of a man in her life. However, this could also be a complaint that men appreciate a woman's beauty only in so far that she is pleasing to him instead of beautiful in herself. "We don't see things as they are but as we are" said Daphne, hinting at a need for relationships to be more empathic, selfless and equitable.

The bird theme on Daphne's new album symbolizes not love itself (as

with Frost), but getting used to a lover you've known for a while. Daphne's bell-like instrumentals and echoey vocals shined through like a bird with its mate at the crack of dawn on *Little Birds* (from Daphne's last album). That classic song reminded the listener of the female nesting instinct with its colorful allusions and dazzling organ. In contrast, new song *Bees Make Honey in the Lion's Head* says how women "never see the mess until the



birds have flown." Perhaps the mess she refers to is the reality of knowing and living with a lover after the honeymoon phase of a relationship has passed (or flown). This bird might also symbolize getting away from the sharp dressed male whose mess she struggles to get used to even though "if she had her way she would tear this building down." Love is not blindness, but one rarely sees the realism and compromise required of love until she gets used to her man after years of knowing him.

Equally as remarkable is the song *Love is a Rebellious Bird*

about playing hard to get and rebelling against the disappointingly routine and codependent aspects of a relationship: "You said I was an angel. How did I fall from grace when the only thing between us was a rebellious bird" who don't play the game? Perhaps the routine or "game" she rebels against is the predictable rhythm of life (bourbon at dinner and serving as a place for him to lay his head after the lights go out too soon). Similarly, the lively and latin-flavored *Sea Is Never Full* alludes to the pros and cons of a committed relationship with a man: You can't live with him but can't live without him. Men are never satisfied no matter how much they labor under the sun nor matter how many riches they gain, "but I'll take the sun into my mouth . . . this river's always been enough for me." This alludes to the fact that a strong lasting relationship requires accepting a partner for who he is and staying optimistic enough to enjoy the good times.

For all listeners local or otherwise, Daphne's new album is a sonic and lyrical journey not to be missed!



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AC/JD

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15 - Harp n Hound, Mystic, CT
29 - Breachway, Charlestown, RI 6:30-10:00

A LITTLE TWISTED

23 - Music Lady, Moosup, CT

ANDY & BETHANY

8 - Shipyard Tavern, Mystic, CT 7-10

ANDY CHANEY

7 - Pizzetta, Mystic, CT 7-10

AZALEA DRIVE

15 - Harbour House, Mystic, CT
30 - Black Sheep, Niantic, CT

BEN CHARLES BAND

8 - Music Lady, Central Village, CT 7:30pm
15 - Sneekers, Groton, CT
16 - Ryan's Pub, Groton, CT

DAN STEVENS

1,2 - Jay Peak, Jay, VT
3 - Daddy Jack's, New London, CT
5,12,19,26 - www.icrvradio.com 3pm
5,12,19,26 - Nightingale's, Old Lyme, CT
6 - The Fez, Stamford, CT
7 - Perks & Corks, Westerly, RI
8 - Pine Loft, Berlin, CT
9 - First Congregational, Old Lyme, CT
10 - Cedar Street Pub, Darien, CT
15 - Rock Harbor, Rockland, ME
16 - Acoustic Artisans, Portland, ME
17 - Spring St Studio, Chester, CT
21 - Strange Brew Pub, Norwich, CT
22 - Arts Center, Marlborough, CT
23 - Old Orchard Farm, E. Lyme, CT

DAN WATSON

2 - Harp n Hound, Mystic, CT
5,15,19 - Daniel Packer, Mystic, CT
6,20 - Tipping Chair, Southington, CT
7 - Red 36, Mystic, CT
8 - Lansdowne Pub, Uncasville, CT
14,28,31 - Ancient Mariner, Mystic, CT
21 - Voodoo Grill, Mystic, CT
22 - Dog Watch, Stonington, CT
26 - Angie's Pier 27, Mystic, CT

10 SOUND WAVES

29 - Comix, Uncasville, CT
30 - Pizzetta, Mystic, CT

DARIK & THE FUNBAGS

8 - Shamrock, Waterbury, CT
15 - Club Meadows, E. Longmeadow, MA
16 - Nanola, Saratoga Springs, NY
23 - Brown Derby, Uncasville, CT
29 - Molly Darcys, Danbury, CT
30 - Blackstone, Southington, CT

THE DRAGONITES

16 - Harbour House, Mystic, CT

THE DRAWBRIDGE BAND

9,23 - Two Trees, Mashentucket, CT 4:30-7:30

EIGHT TO THE BAR

9 - Swing City, Cambridge, MA

THE FAKE EXPERIENCE

29 - Angie's Pier 27, Mystic, CT

F & BLUES BAND

21 - Atrium Lounge, Mashantucket, CT 8:30
22 - Stash's Cafe, New London, CT

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22 - June's Outback, Killingworth, CT
23 - Toyo Grille, Colchester, CT
29 - Stash's, New London, CT

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22 - All Souls, New London, CT

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30 - Wood River Inn, Richmond, RI

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8 - Pier 27 Lounge, Mystic, CT
12 - Rathskeller, Charlestown, RI 8pm
30 - Latitude 41, Mystic, CT 7pm-10pm

JACK NAZZARO

9,30 - Haversham, Westerly, RI
15 - Amigos, Westerly, RI 7:30 pm
23 - Buon Appetito, N. Stonington, CT
29 - Brazen Hen, Westerly, RI

JAMES HARRIS

1,9,15,22,29 - Pizzetta, Mystic, CT
2,6,13,16,20,27,30 - Daniel Packer, Mystic, CT
3,24 - MaugleSierra, Ledyard, CT 3pm
5,12,19,26 - Harp&Hound, Mystic, CT
8 - Venice, Westerly, RI 7pm
14 - Steakloft, Mystic, CT 7pm
21 - Red 36, Mystic, CT 6pm
23 - Latitude41, Mystic, CT 7pm
28 - Perks & Corks, Westerly, RI 8pm

JAY DEMPSEY BAND

14 - Atrium, Mashentucket, CT
21 - Sneekers, Groton, CT
27 - Steak Loft, Mystic, CT

KALA FARNHAM

1 - Grill 37, Pomfret, CT 7-10pm
2 - Hanks, Brooklyn, CT 7-10pm
15 - Nightingales, Old Lyme, CT 7-9pm
23 - The Duck, Sturbridge, MA 7-10pm
30 - AS220, Providence, RI 8:30pm
31 - Stomping Ground, Putnam, CT 1-4pm

LES HALEY

w/AMIE COFFEY

10 - Sneekers, Groton, CT 4-7

MAJESTIC FUZZ

15 - The Irons, Hilton, Mystic, CT 7:30pm
16 - Perks & Corks, Westerly, RI
22 - Lanesdown, Uncasville, CT 5:30pm
29 - Brown Derby, Uncasville, CT 5pm
30 - Mr Z's, Plainfield, CT 7pm

MUDDY RUCKUS

28 - Stopping Ground, Putnam, CT

RAMBLEWOOD

7 - John's, Mystic, CT 8pm

SAM E. JAMES

23 - Roadhouse, Wyoming, RI

STYFF KITTY

9 - Social Club, Bradford, RI
16 - Octane, NL, CT
23 - Tavern on the Hill, W. Greenwich, RI
29 - Sneekers, Groton, CT

SUE MENHART BAND

29 - Steak Loft, Mystic, CT 7pm

VINCE THOMPSON

& THE NEXT FUN THING

2 - Chamard Vineyards, Clinton, CT 4-7
8 - Knickerbocker, Westerly, RI 8-12:30

THE WHALES

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The Blind Boys Of Alabama

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By Tom Matthew

Everybody these days seems to be talking about Twiddle. Rising up the ranks in the festival scene over the last few years, Twiddle has grown from a young and talented band with a lot of potential to all out phenomenon. Their name has been buzzing around these parts for some time, while passionate fans religiously follow them around the country on tour.

Imagine starting with a background in Phish – these Vermonters are steeped in Phish as well as The Grateful Dead. Now add in a good helping of reggae flavor. Throw in some Dave Matthews style dramatic vocals with a positive message and you have the seed of a notion of what Twiddle is all about.

Having all these influences, Twiddle maintains their own distinctive sound. The recently released album “Plump – Chapter 1” is full of great tunes and an assortment of styles. It’s an uplifting LP full of catchy hooks and fun jams, faithfully catching their sound in the studio without succumbing to overproduction or studio tricks.

From the opening track “Complacent Race”, they kick off with high energy. A horn section punctuates the chorus and sets the pace for the rest

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of the album. “Amydst the Myst” follows up with a ballad feel and sweet lyrics. “Polluted Beauty” is a fan favorite reggae jam preaching a strong message – don’t let technology strangle you, and appreciate the nature and beauty of the world.

I had the opportunity to speak with the lead singer, guitarist, and main songwriter Mihali Savoulidis. Though Twiddle is known as a jam band, Mihali’s distinctive voice is what serves as a signature to their sound.

Tom Matthew: Twiddle has just released a new album entitled “Plump – Chapter 1”. I’ve been listening to it for the last few weeks and really enjoying it. Tell us about your new album.

Mihali Savoulidis: Thanks so much. It’s supposed to be a double disc. We’ve released this first disc, which is what you’ve been hearing. We’re not really sure when the next disc will get released - sometime in the next year. We’re going into the studio in February to start working on it. We already have a bunch of stuff for it. We have a lot of newer songs that have been in the works that we’d like to get on the second disc. We’re going to cut everything and see what makes the album.

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The first disc that we've finished is more focused on lyrical content rather than our live sound. We wanted an album that would stand up on its own with this version of the songs, rather than doing it live. That's how we got the strings, horns, and whatever other resources we took up to Burlington to get it done.

TM: The album itself still has a lot of that live feel to it. Did you record live in the studio, or did you record it one track at a time?

MS: We tracked it out one instrument at a time. A lot of the songs on the first disc are songs we played live for a while, and other songs we wrote once the recording got underway.

TM: What studio did you record in and what was the vibe there?

MS: We were at Signal Kitchen in Burlington, VT. Signal Kitchen is great. It's right in downtown Burlington. It's a smaller studio, but it's got a lot of really great recording stuff in it. It's got some nice microphones, a lot of vintage gear – the engineer Dave DeCristo that we worked with is super knowledgeable about that stuff, so we had a lot of fun trying out different mics, compressors, and all kinds of stuff.

TM: Twiddle fuses a lot of different styles and sounds into one package. There's an obvious jam band element, a reggae feel, and a lot of funk. How did this mashup of styles come together?

MS: I think it's just our interests. We all come from different musical backgrounds. We all have a different style, which goes to make up what you hear. I'm the reggae influence, for sure. Ryan, our keyboard player, he's more classically trained. I think what it is, once the songs get into all our hands, our influences start coming out within the songs. We've always made a point of trying to be a "genre-free" band, to not try to play one style of music or another. We like it all, so we play it all.

TM: Tell me about the songwriting on the album. Is there one of you that brings most of the songs to the table, or is it a more collaborative effort on everyone's part?

MS: On this album, they were all my songs except for Brook's song "Dusk Till Dawn", and Ryan, our keyboard player helped me write "Amydst the Myst" and "Syncopated Healing". As far as the lyrics go, other than "Dusk Till Dawn", they're songs that I've written over the last few years. This is much different from the second album to come. That will be much more of a band collaboration. The other guys, Zdenek and Ryan have new songs that they wrote on their own. I also have a couple of mine. The second album will be much more diverse in terms of the authors of the songs.

TM: Some people have compared you to Phish. It's kind of an obvious comparison, with you guys sharing the home state of Vermont and some similarity in style. How do you feel about being compared to bands like Phish and other jam bands?

MS: I think it's kind of a double edged sword. It's an honor, because we obviously love those bands. They're clear influences for us. When we started off as a band, Phish was our number one favorite band, along with other bands like String Cheese and the Dead and all that. So there's no way that style would not come out in our music.

On the other hand, if you put the jamming aside and you put the songs next to each other, we're a very different band from them. It's like comparing the Dead to Phish. Obviously, sort of similar scenes and kind of embracing the improvisational side of music, but they really don't sound anything alike in the end.

We're very used to the comparison, but I think I can strongly say that our music is very different from theirs. They are a band we love very much, and it's the kind of music we started writing, so there's no way we couldn't be influenced by them. And the same thing with Phish. They've been influenced by other bands that they could be compared to, but that's just the way music works.

TM: One of the things that set you apart from other jam bands is the strong reggae feel. Have you guys ever considered doing Cali Roots reggae
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festival, or otherwise working with the reggae scene in general?

MS: We'd love to. I think that we do have a lot of the reggae feel. I don't know that we have enough of it in our music to be embraced by those scenes. That's certainly music I really love to listen to, something I used to listen to a lot growing up, so it would be great. We'd love it. We're down for anything.

I think there's an overall happiness to reggae, and to our message and overall vibe that go well together. If I'm writing a song, and I've got a verse and a chorus, I'll say "Why don't I try the chorus reggae?" and for some reason my ears always like it that way. So we would love to. I'd be interested to see how we would be received in those scenes, for sure.

TM: What makes the jam scene different from some of the more mainstream music genres out there? What do you think makes it so special?

MS: I think the best thing the scene has going for it is how passionate the fans are. I think our success is directly due to how passionate our fans are about our music, and how not just the music but the overall message that we try to portray to them - a beautiful community of very nice people, respectful fans - that is what I'm trying to say. Anyway, to us that's the one thing we notice about touring in this scene is just how strong the fans latch onto their bands.

The pop acts, and a lot of country acts, and indie rock, whatever - their fans are amazing too, I'm sure, but our fans are driving hundreds of miles to see these shows. They're seeing 6 or 7 shows or 15 shows out of a tour, and they don't want to miss a night. Part of that is us being able to put on a different live show every night and try to explore how we can make each song different from the last time we played it. So it's a fun experience for everyone.

TM: There's a positive, almost spiritual quality to a lot of the lyrics in your songs. Do you guys have a specific guiding philosophy as a band, or is it more of a general awareness towards understanding and consciousness?

MS: It's a general awareness. Me being the prime songwriter and lyricist, it comes from an obvious place. Clearly we're not treating the earth the way we should. People aren't being good to each other. There's just a lot more that we can do as individuals on a small level that I think we could make a bigger positive change in our personal lives, and overall as a race of people.

When I said obvious, it's just kind of the right way to approach things in my mind, maybe not for others, but there's just a lot of hatred out there, there's a lot of meanness and cruelty and status, ego - all that crap.

TM: Who are some of the bands that you've come up with over the years? Do you have any musicians you'd like to give a shout out to that you've toured with, or maybe are special to you in some way?

MS: We've had great experiences with bands like Dopapod, Papadosio, The Werks - these are all our peers. We've been touring with them for so many years, or just bumping into them on the road, doing festivals, doing shows together, doing tours together - we did a whole tour with The Werks, we did a whole tour with Papadosio. And there are bigger bands that we're starting to get to know a little more and playing with, people like Moe. and some others that have given us really nice looks and treated us very well. But as far as our peers go, for sure, the people I mentioned before. We also have Todd Stoops, he's great. We have a great relationship with him, and he's been a huge supporter of us, and it's been really nice getting to know him over the last few years.

TM: And Todd Stoops is featured in the new album on "Every Soul".

MS: Yes.

TM: Aside from finishing up "Plump - Chapter 2" in 2016, what does the future have in store?

MS: The only festival that's been announced is down in Florida at Okeechobee. All those announcements should be coming pretty soon. I think next year is looking really good for us. Hogs for the Cause in New

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Orleans - we're going back to NOLO which is great. The rooms are getting nicer, they're getting bigger. That provides a better concert environment for us and for our fans, for sure.

TM: You like playing the big venues?

MS: I do. It's better sound, and I think it's a better experience. As a concertgoer, when I was younger, I much preferred going to bigger rooms and theaters, as opposed to the small clubs, in terms of sound, overall room space and all that stuff.

TM: Thanks so much for talking with us today.

MS: Yeah, man. Thank you so much.



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Idlewheel

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OMG (as they say), it is such a revelation to hear some grown-up music for a change!!

I’ve complained (sort of) in the past that the magnificent Idlewheel, the duet project of singer-songwriters Jack Sundrud and Craig Bickhardt, has not released enough music.

Well, right on the heels of their six-song, tantalizing, but criminally too short by definition EP, “Idlewheel 3,” comes this absolute gem, recorded before a live audience in an East Norriton, Pennsylvania studio.

Augmented solely by a light-handed percussionist (noted Philly session drummer Tommy Geddes), “Morningstar” shows off what is so great about Sundrud and Bickhardt, as their tightness, professionalism, emotionalism and just good old plain, down to Earth, self-assured songwriting and singing continues the saga of one of the most underrated ensembles in popular music today.

Clearly, neither Sundrud nor Bickhardt has anything to prove here, or anywhere else for that matter. Collectively and singularly, they have written hit songs for a plethora of contemporary artists as diverse as Kenny Rogers, Ty Herndon, Poco, Ray Charles, B.B. King, and Johnny Cash.

Given that, it is no surprise that Idlewheel, through three albums and the aforementioned EP, has always presented gorgeous, heart-felt songs in a laid back, everyman, everyday fashion that rings so true in our overly commercial,

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image-conscious musical world.

Want a taste of their talent? Go ahead and check out the “guitar pull” call and response between Sundrud and Bickhardt on this great record, two great friends and performers at the top of their game.

It’s simply what great music should stand for today.

- Mark T. Gould



Slackjaw

“It’s Always Something”
Independent

There’s something about trio rock – bass, drums, guitar. It’s minimalistic, where less is more, and if done well, it just simply gets the job done. The New Jersey blues-rock band Slackjaw does just that, with their second album – “It’s Always Something.” But if you listen carefully, it’s actually not so simple, they just make it seem like it is. Guitarist/songwriter/vocalist John Thompson’s influences run the gamut from Steve Vai and Joe Satriani, to Robert Johnson and Buddy Guy. Bassist Carl Capodice adds jazz and funk techniques to the band’s sound, while drummer Randy Marinelli fills it all in. Thompson’s guitar is muddy and rich, at times gritty and angry and other times smooth and tasteful. He’s one talented guy.

The title track, “It’s Always Something,” is a driving, rocking tune with Thompson just killing it on the guitar lead, as he also does on the slow blues number “Don’t Give Me No Jive” and on “Cold Day in Hell.” “New Addiction” is a great bar song, poppy and radio-ready, with a funky bass solo. Remnants of Stevie Ray Vaughan surround “Soul’s Up for Sale” as all three

band members show off their talent with plenty of cool bass licks. This may be my favorite track on the CD because, well, blues-rock in the minor key is just plain awesome. If this band is given a fighting chance, “If You Ever Leave” could well become a classic, reminiscent of Susan Tedeschi’s “It Hurt So Bad.”

Thompson breaks out the acoustic guitar for the closing track, “Bottle of Whiskey.” It’s another great bar song (for obvious reasons!) It builds back into heavy guitars and features some hootin’ and hollerin’ during the a cappella chorus. It’s super fun and super catchy. Keep a look out for this trio!

- Sue Menhart



Michael Cleary Band

“Uplift”

Independent

The Michael Cleary Band has been creating original music in Connecticut for 24 years, and it’s hard to find someone who hasn’t heard of them. They were a 2014 Connecticut Music Award Winner for Best Jam Band, and have won many other awards and accolades. The musicians in this band are talented, versatile, and all sing, even switching off on lead vocal duties, which is rare. They write all their own songs. When they play live, the venues are packed, and the band – DOES NOT STOP. I don’t think I’ve ever seen them take a break (that might be a stretch but you know what I mean.) They have performed with Tower of Power, Little Feat, Average White Band, Joan Osborne, Peter Wolf, and NRBQ among others. The current lineup is: Michael Cleary – guitar/vocals, Vin Delaria – keys/vocals, Edmund Peart – drums/vocals, Zach Vetter – guitar/vocals, and Jedd Chlebowski – bass/vocals.

The band has just released their sixth

album, “Uplift.” The songs’ inspirational messages, catchy melodies and rich harmonies fuse rock, funk, country and pop. This project highlights the band’s maturity in songwriting and further illustrates their sheer musical talent. Every song is tight, expertly tracked and produced (by the band themselves), with pleasing vocals and deep, rich harmonies. The CD kicks off with the funky and precise “How You Keep it Up” deliberately showcasing the musicians. “Love is Such a Sweet Sound” is anthem-like with clever songwriting and a lively island sound. “2nd Nature” throws out some horns with a Caribbean flare, while “I Don’t Care What You Look Like” takes you to a Hawaiian luau. “Turn It Around” is a surprise flashback to 70s smooth R&B with more rich harmonies, while “Dontcha Think” features a country shuffle. The final track, “Don’t Stray,” is 60s Beatles-esque. In summary, this band can do anything, and they do it all well.

Special guests on the CD include Curt Ramm on trumpet, Chip Fenney on sax, Rob Volo on trombone, Brian Kelly on trumpet, Frank Bauer on percussion and John Corvo on vocals.

Catch them live when you can. They have plenty of material, have a ton of fun, and they are all just super nice guys on top of all that!

- Sue Menhart



Sam Hooper & Mike Null

“Hoodoo Man Blues”

FBJoy Records

Sam Hooper hails from Cleveland, Ohio, but is a well traveled artist; performing in China, Switzerland, Finland, Japan and the USA. This, his forth CD on FBJoy Records, “Hoodoo Man Blues” was named the 2015 Best Self-Produced CD from Cleveland Blues Society. There are only five cuts on

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this disc; four of which are well chosen covers; songs that are not over done yet written by well established artists in the blues. One song was penned by Hooper. He is usually more of a songwriter than what is heard on this CD. This project came together very quickly due deadlines that had to be met in order to have Mike Null in this project as he was leaving to tour China. Before I go any further, despite the resemblance of the last name I must say NO; he is no relation to my husband or I!

This CD begins with the title track "Hoodoo Man Blues" which was written by Junior Wells. The absence of the harmonica has no negative impact on this tune. The unique intro sets this version apart from others. Hooper's guitar playing is powerful and comes across with authenticity! Track two, "Itchin' To Be Your Man" is a Hooper original. The lyrics have a flirty phraseology, i.e. "So beautiful you're tantalizin' my heart!" His smooth jazzy vocal inflections and the prominent piano riffs by Sakait Baksar give this tune a Mose Allison groove. Hooper and Null split the guitar duty almost seamlessly! Track three, "If Trouble Was Money" is an Albert Collins slow blues that features Hooper's partner, Mike Null on vocals. This song is a bit of a staple in the blues world and Null gives it a classic touch! Baksar starts out the solo portion of this tune on organ and is followed by both Hooper and Null on guitar. The stop time at the end of the solos sets them aside in the remainder of this cut.

Track four, "Just Got Back From Baby's" is a song penned by ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons and their manager, Bill Ham. Hooper serves up some well phrased vocals and guitar along with Null, who trade off on guitar at the finish of this number. The fifth and final cut is a John Lee Hooker tune called, "Messin' With The Hook"; a spin-off of Mel London's "Messin' With The Kid" made famous by Junior Wells. Unlike Hooker's version, this take has more structure to it. You Hooker fans know what I'm referring to. The version on this CD also has a heartier and much funkier sound than the original by Hooker.

As I mentioned before, this CD won the award for 2015 Best Self-Produced CD from Cleveland Blues Society, which means it's off the Memphis, TN for the international finals. We wish them luck in their endeavor, or should I say, "Break-a-leg!"

Remaining musicians; Derrick James-bass; Reggie Holmes-drums

- Ms Marci

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Cage the Elephant "Tell Me I'm Pretty" RCA

As the holiday season comes to an end, it seems that the greatest gift we are left with is what Cage the Elephant gave us late December. Coming off their Grammy-nominated album Melophobia, Cage the Elephant doesn't miss a beat with Tell Me I'm Pretty. Produced by Dan Auerbach of The Black Keys, the fourth album from the Kentucky-based alt rockers is contagious to say the least.

Cage the elephant wastes no time on their album as they come out swinging with an eccentric piece of blues-rock. The lead track, "Cry Baby," starts off with a storm of blues distortion that sets the tone for the self-assured, yet neurotic, lyrics that accompany it. The paranoid interlude of "Monday you cough, Tuesday you cry, Wednesday in bed, what if you die?" is juxtaposed with words of advice ("open up your eyes or life will pass you by") to display the lyrical paradox of the song.

Next comes "Mess Around," the only single released from the album. The catchy tune echoes with reverb and shows the hand of Dan Auerbach as the song sounds as though it came off a Black Keys album. The groovy, danceable rhythms are infectious as Matt Shultz finds himself in the song.

Any fan of Cage the Elephant will find solace in knowing that they are still the same boys they were on their first album, only better. As "Too Late To Say Goodbye" shows us, Cage the Elephant have managed to reach out while still holding true to their roots as a band. Matt Shultz's lyrical masterpiece shines with its musical simplicity which only serves to highlight the brilliance in Shultz's emotional charged voice which gives life to such lines as "the echo of my mother's words, 'baby don't you play with fire.'" Though this song is ul-

timately slow, it packs a punch as deep bass combines with truthful lyricism to contribute power to the album.

The essential part of the album is found later in its eerie ballad "How Are You True." The build up of the song contributes to the tone of the album as it becomes emblematic of what makes Cage the Elephant great. This beautiful, intimate song provides personality to the album with its youthful tones that characterize a lack of direction in life. The ending track of the album reiterates the alternative rock that Cage the Elephant is known for. The hook driven song led by the words "I wanna waste my life with you," provides a clean and exciting outro for the album as it finishes with the same neurotic self assurance that it started with

Cage the Elephant manages to surpass their previous work with their new album that shows the band's maturity alongside the unique sound that they are known for. Outside of Cage the Elephant, Dan Auerbach shows that his skills as a producer have improved greatly since his venture with Lana Del Rey on Ultraviolence. This is an exciting new album and one I would certainly not miss.

- Nic Hall

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The Best in Blues – 2015

This past year will be remembered not for any great new release but for who we lost. There aren't too many iconic blues musicians left and we lost the most iconic of them all in 2015.

I would like to thank Dana Fargnoli for once again contributing to this column. Dana is the blues director for WCNI radio at Connecticut College. You can hear Dana's "Out of the Blues" show every Saturday from 9 am to noon on 90.9 FM. I would also like to acknowledge the fact that Dana hears many more blues records than I do and I'm sure that he will be playing many of the records that are on our lists throughout the month of January. So without further ado, here's what we came up with for 2015.

Dana's list:

1. **Anthony Geraci & The Boston Blues All Stars**
"Fifty Shades of Blue" Delta Groove Music
2. **James Harman** "Bonetime" Electro-Fi Records
3. **Buddy Guy** "Born to Play Guitar" RCA Records
4. **Sherwood Fleming** "Blues, Blues, Blues" Dynaflow Records
5. **Muddy Waters 100** "Muddy Waters 100" Raisin' Music Records
6. **Eddie Cotton** "One at a Time" DeChamp Records
7. **Harmonica Shah** "If You Live to Get Old You Will Understand"
Electro-Fi Records
8. **Shemekia Copeland** "Outskirts of Love" Alligator Records
9. **Joe Bonamassa** "Muddy Wolf at Red Rocks" J&R Adventures
10. **Cash Box Kings** "Holding Court" Blind Pig Records

Bill's List:

1. **Buddy Guy** "Born to Play Guitar" RCA Records
2. **Tinsley Ellis** "Tough Love" Heartfixer Music
3. **Gregg Allman** "Back to Macon, GA" Rounder Records
4. **Robert Cray** "4 Nights of 40 Years Live" Provogue Records
5. **Lucky Peterson** "Live in Marciac" Jazz Village Records
6. **Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters** "Father's Day"
Stony Plain Records
7. **Shemekia Copeland** "Outskirts of Love" Alligator Records
8. **Charlie Musselwhite** "I Ain't Lyin'" Henrietta Records
9. **Joe Louis Walker** "Everybody Wants a Piece" Provogue Records
10. **Taj Mahal & The Hula Blues Band** "Live From Kauai"
Luleana Music

I would like to wish all Sound Waves Magazine readers a happy and healthy 2016. Dana and I are dedicating this year's top ten lists to the memory of BB King.

- Bill Harriman



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COOKING WITH THE BLUES



By Luci & Jack Chaplin

With Christmas behind us, we should all take a deep breath in unison. It is no wonder that the holidays make people crazy—there is so much to prepare, whether it's meals, gifts, travel arrangements, etc. Then, Christmas is over and we have a week to catch our breath and regroup before New Years. I have so much to be thankful for this year, most of all, that my family is happy and healthy. We have had many deaths this year, have had friends and family in and out of the hospital, and have worried about our own health. It is our responsibility to stay positive and optimistic and keep looking to the future. One of my resolutions for 2016 is to do more random acts of kindness. My girls, quite often, will pay for the person behind them in the drive-thru line. These small acts of kindness may not seem like much but they truly have a powerful impact on the lives of those affected. Too often we are all in such a hurry that we lose sight of what actually matters: having personal, heartfelt, human interactions with one another.

In that same vein, my girls and I have made it our Christmas tradition to serve omelets at the First Congregational Church in New London on Christmas morning. For the past four years, we have gotten up at 5:00 AM and trekked down to church to receive direction from James Stidfole and Peter Roberts. This year, we made more than 100 omelets... and then, of course, completed our annual Christmas Crossword Puzzle! It is so nice to make a connection with our community. The reality is that regardless of how much money someone has, or where they live, or how they choose to dress, they are all wonderful people of worth. They all have something special to offer, whether it is a kind word, an angelic singing voice, or a 100-watt smile. It is important for all of us to stop and take the time to talk with one another, rather than just passing by. By taking the extra time, we are able to build a mutually beneficial relationship in our community. We are so fortunate to have people like James and Peter in this town; people who are dedicated to taking care of those who are less fortunate and who ensure that their basic needs are met with compassion and care. Our Christmas tradition at the First Congregational Church gives meaning to the holiday and we are forever grateful.

Following Christmas day, we welcomed Thor Jensen to play at Daddy Jack's on December 26. His musicianship was mesmerizing. Originally
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from Stonington, Connecticut, Thor has since relocated to New York City. We are so thankful that he took the time out of his busy tour schedule to bring down the house at Daddy Jack's! We are also excited to welcome Carl Franklin back to Daddy Jack's on New Year's Eve. Carl has been busy rehearsing for what promises to be an amazing performance! Beyond having such wonderful music on New Year's Eve, we will also be offering a complimentary midnight buffet, featuring traditional foods—Mexican tamales, black eyed peas stewed with hickory smoked bacon, corn bread, New Orleans-style Jambalaya, pasta, and wood-fired pizzas. We hope to see all of you on New Year's Eve, especially those of you who like to cut a rug!

Before we sign off, I want to share with you what I believe to be our best video yet: Lobster Newburg with Mark Greenleaf. This recipe goes back generations in the Greenleaf family, and has been carried on through the years. As a child, Mark remembers his grandmother making Lobster Newburg but he never remembers eating it, as only the adults were allowed to eat this masterpiece. It was wonderful to collaborate with someone that shares a love of good food and that believes in keeping traditions alive through recipes. Please click here to enjoy:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIwv2xwa2uY&feature=youtu.be

Wishing everyone a happy, healthy, prosperous 2016!

- Jack & Luci



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