

Sound

Magazine

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November 2020



**A Southern New England
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Interview
with**

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Plus

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- The Toneshifters

- Rah-C

- Billy J

- Danny Brooks & Lil Miss Debi

- Jeremiah Johnson



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Dear Readers,

As I am finishing up this month's issue I look forward to a very important day tomorrow. It is a day that I will cast my vote for the next President of this United States. This election is probably the most important one in my lifetime. This country has never been this divided. It has become them or us. It is time for a change, a time to bring this country back together. A time to heal. So I hope everyone gets out there and votes! Let your voice be heard.

I have been trying to get a project going that will support the grassroots of the music industry. It is creating a theater of sorts to view performances of musicians in the Virtual Reality environment. People will pay a small fee to view these performances and the artist will get royalties for their video. There are over 16 million VR headsets in the world today. We want to tap into that market and support the artists and their work. We have already invested money into the VR video camera and the audio equipment needed to do this. But we need funding to finish this. Web site coding for VR is the biggest cost. So please check out our crowd funding project on Kickstart. Every little bit helps - \$20 or even \$10. What ever you contribute doesn't get deducted from your account unless we reach our goal. This is *All or Nothing*. Here is the link to the project. It also describes in more detail what we are doing. Let Keep the Music Alive!

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/swvrcafe/sound-waves-vr-cafe?ref=4jgbgw>

Thank You All!
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SLEEP'S DARK AND SILENT GATE

By Rex Rutkoski

(Artists from a variety of genres passed under Jackson Browne's metaphorical "Sleep's Dark and Silent Gate" in the past several weeks. Among them are these tributes written by veteran observer of contemporary music, Rex Rutkoski)

JERRY JEFF WALKER: "HE JUMPED SO HIGH, THEN HE LIGHTLY TOUCHED DOWN."

The sun over the Sonoran desert sweltered toward 130 degrees as I left the hospital in Yuma, Ariz., following the birth of our first daughter in July of 1971.



I had to head back alone to my military base 30 miles away, but I wanted to make a quick stop for a beverage and to process all that had taken place that day.

I put a quarter in the juke box, and the sweet words danced through the room:

"I knew a man Bojangles and he'd dance for you

In worn out shoes

With silver hair, a ragged shirt, and baggy pants

The old soft shoe

He jumped so high, jumped so high

Then he lightly touched down"

It was the first song that comfort-

ed me as a new father.

It was the day I became friends with the musician who authored it, Jerry Jeff Walker, a man I never met.

Thousands of people became his friend in their own ways and remained so for life, just by listening to his words sung by him or the many artists who rendered them for him. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band is most associated with "Mr. Bojangles," having scored a Top 10 hit with it in 1971.

Bob Dylan, John Denver, Nina Simone, Whitney Houston, Neil Diamond, Sammy Davis Jr. and many, many others offered their own interpretations.

IN THE REAL WORLD

In the real world, he was Oneonta, N.Y., native Ronald Clyde Crosby, but when he stepped in front of the microphone he was Jerry Jeff Walker, who released 36 albums during his 51-year recording career.

He won't be writing for us anymore, but the cancer that claimed him Oct. 28 won't stop us from listening to him.

That's the beauty of music, of all art and expression. It endures, even after



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its creators leave us.

"Other than Willie, Jerry Jeff is the most important musician to happen to Austin, Texas, I would have to say," offered Ray Benson of the country group Asleep at the Wheel. Walker is credited with helping to create the genre referred to as "outlaw country" — once described as a "blend between rock and folk."

Tributes poured in for Walker from names well known and the fans he well-loved.

Legendary is the true story of the time that Jerry Jeff drove Jimmy Buffett to Key West in the late 1960s and, in that simple act, likely changed Jimmy's life forever.

"In such a hurtful moment, I have to say, that I am SO happy that he drove me to Key West. That lanky frame, cowboy hat, that energy, voice, those songs, wry wit and wonderful laugh will be with me forever," Buffett noted.

THANKS FOR THE SONGS

Tim McGraw, for whom Walker wrote many songs, added this memory: "She Knows Her Daddy Sings" was one of the songs I used to play for my girls when they were little. Thinking back on those days today....and missing you, Jerry Jeff Walker. Thank you for the songs."

Eli Manning added, "Growing up his music was a staple in the Manning household."

And Jason Isbell: "One day I'd like to be an old man who dances onstage like John Prine and Jerry Jeff Walker."

Even President Clinton sent his praise: "I was saddened to hear about the passing of Jerry Jeff Walker. I'll never forget seeing him at the Armadillo music hall in Austin in 1972, or his performance for my 1992 campaign the night before Election Day. He was a true original, and his music will live on."

Yes, yes, it will!

SPENCER DAVIS: HE WAS THE MAN!



Spencer Davis, who died Oct. 19 at 81 of pneumonia, always considered the Spencer Davis Group to have been in the first wave of the British Invasion because their first hit came in 1966.

"I was overwhelmed by the size of the United States," the Welsh artist recalled. "The West and East Coasts were like two different worlds."

But what an exciting world it proved to be for the group that the New York Times credited for "helping power 'The Sound of the '60s.'"

The band toured with The Who and The Rolling Stones.

Their breakout hit, "Keep on Running," was a cover of a song by West Indian performer Jackie Edwards.

Davis received a telegram from the Beatles when it became number one on the UK charts in '66, moving the Fab Four out of the top with their double A-sided single, "We Can Work It Out/Day Tripper."

THE "BIG CHILL."

When, years later, Columbia Pictures was trying to find the original master of the Spencer Davis Group rock classic, "Gimme Some Lovin'" for the early '80s Academy Award-nominated film, "The Big Chill," their search stopped in Los Angeles with Davis.

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MUSIC NOTES

“Letter to Bruuuuce”

By Mark T. Gould

Dear Bruuuuuce:

Is it OK if I call you Bruuuuuce?

After all, I’ve been a fan of yours for going on 50 years, and the intimacy of your music makes me feel like we are friends.

But, in case you have any doubts, I want to prove that it’s really me.

I’ve seen you over 25 times in concert. Yeah, I know you get that a lot, but here’s the proof:

Spring of 1974, you on top of a flatbed trailer in the University of Connecticut parking lot? You running through the audience, with Clarence, blowing away, on your shoulders?

Yep, that was me. The very first time.



solo “Tom Joad” tour? Five minutes from my house?

Right again, but it wasn’t easy. The gig sold out in about three minutes, so I had to drive an hour each way to score a ticket off a friend.

It was more than worth it.

Springsteen on Broadway?

Uh, not so much. I couldn’t get approval for a second mortgage in time to afford the tickets.

But, I digress. There’s been a bunch more, but now I think you know that it’s me.

Anyway, after all those thrilling live shows, I am writing this letter to you to thank you for

restoring my faith in your recording process, with your new album, “Letter To You.”

I gotta be honest, Bruuuuuce, in my humble mega-fan opinion, the studio has been less than kind to you for a long time, pretty much, notwithstanding your solo work, since “Born in the USA,” back in ’84.

I mean, don’t get me wrong. There have been sundry gems, songs that just grabbed my emotions by the throat and wouldn’t let go, from “Tunnel of Love” to “Western Stars” (well, maybe not so much on “Hu-

man Touch” or “Lucky Town,” but they were still semi-interesting).

But, I’m sorry, Bruuuuuce, but they all kinda paled when stacked up against the power and glory of “Born to Run,” “Darkness on the Edge of Town,” “The River,” and even “Greetings from Asbury Park,” and “The Wild, The Innocent and the E Street Shuffle.”

But, at age 70 (recorded last year) and released into the teeth of the Covid crisis this fall, you brought it back to your roots and strengths on “Letter,” recording it all over just a few days, live in the studio for the first time in God knows how long, with the guys who have always bring out the best in you, The E Street Band.

No more multi-month studio marathons like for “Born to Run,” with the infamous 16 hours of recording to get Big Man’s “Jungleland” solo just....right....(I mean, the finished product was a monumental triumph, but I think you get my drift). No horns, fiddles, or God bless us, Tom Morello.

Just you, your guys (and girl), and a triumphant return to long-missing, although often hinted-upon, greatness.

The album is deceptive at first, given that the opening track, “One Minute You’re Here,” with its strings and haunting keyboards, sounds like it could be an outtake of sorts from “Western Stars.”

But, that changes with the powerful, smack-in-the-face, E Street intro to the title track, “Letter To You,” which transports listeners back to the early days when you were pushing to get physically and



figuratively out of town.

It sounds as good, or even better, than anything on those formative and inspiring early records, when you were battling to come to grips with your yearning.

And, “Letter” just gets better from there.

Man, you must have been reminiscing a bit about the past, too, bringing back “Janey Need a Shooter,” so different from co-writer Warren Zevon’s version that it’s a totally different song; and the double-shot from so many days gone by, “If I Was the Priest,” and “Song For Orphans.”

As “Letter” comes to its glorious conclusion, you titled the last track “I’ll See You In My Dreams.”

No, Bruuuuuce, I think you’ve got it backward.

Thanks to your gifts, we’ll all see you in our dreams.

And, speaking of dreams, somewhere, the “Ghosts,” the Big Man and the Phantom, are smiling.

Thank you for restoring my faith in your faith. I can’t wait to hear these songs, along with a bunch of the others, live.

Sincerely, your fan and friend always,

Maaaark (sorry, I couldn’t resist)



Fall of 1980, Portland, Oregon Memorial Coliseum? The night you did “On Top of Old Smokey,” for Mount St. Helens?

Me again.

Summer of 1980? Meadowlands Arena in Jersey? Pretty much in your backyard?

You got it. Third row. What a night!! Where’d you get those guns?

Fall of 1992? Hartford Civic Center? The Other Band?

No way. Sorry.....Not “Earth shaking, pants dropping or legendary” enough.

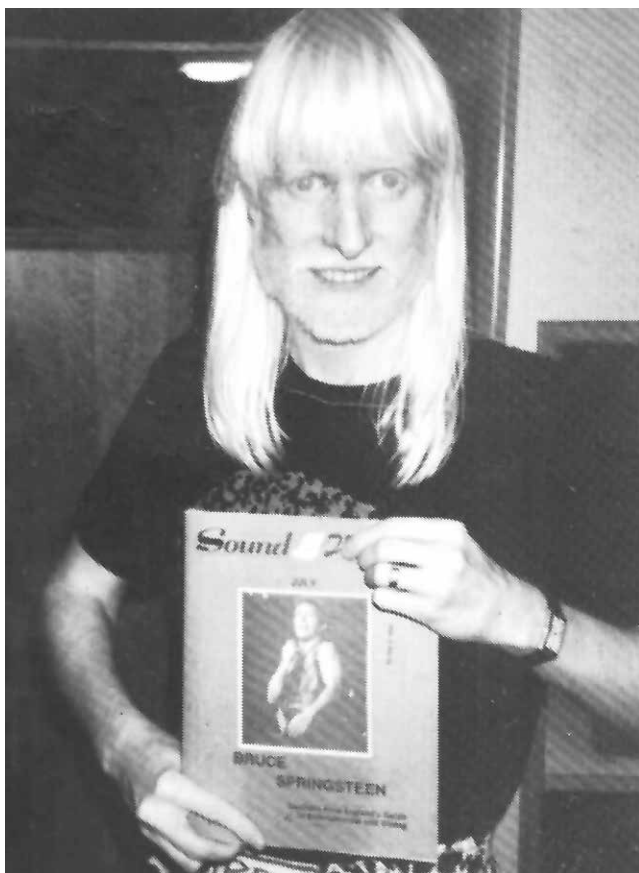
In other words, not the E Street Band.

But.....

Fall of 1996? Oakdale Theatre in Wallingford, Connecticut? The

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Edgar Winter

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All The World's a Stage

"Ornery"

By Sue Menhart

Football just isn't the same. Baseball wasn't the same. Halloween wasn't the same. Thanksgiving undoubtedly, will not be the same. I try not to think about the dissimilarities too much because they just make me ornery. And nothing good ever comes of being ornery. Grumpy old men who never got what they wanted out of life are ornery. Aging spinsters and old maids who never married, if they're mad about it, are ornery. Scrooges are ornery. Children who don't get their way are ornery. Musicians who never became rock stars can be the orniest of all. I've seen them in action and it ain't pretty. I've even seen one in the mirror.

It's rather easy to be ornery these days, so hard to be upbeat and positive. But historically, I have preferred to not be ornery. I have preferred to roll with the punches and grab what kind of joy I possibly could. I have preferred to bring joy, not more orneriness.



I was in a band once (remember those?) where the bass player was the orniest dude I ever met. He was overweight and had constant back problems so therefore always had the perfect excuse for not helping load the equipment. "Hey Jack, some help here with this one-hundred-pound bass cabinet?" "No, not today Sue, back's acting up." "OK, I'll get it. Rock on." And he would in fact rock on, he was a darn good



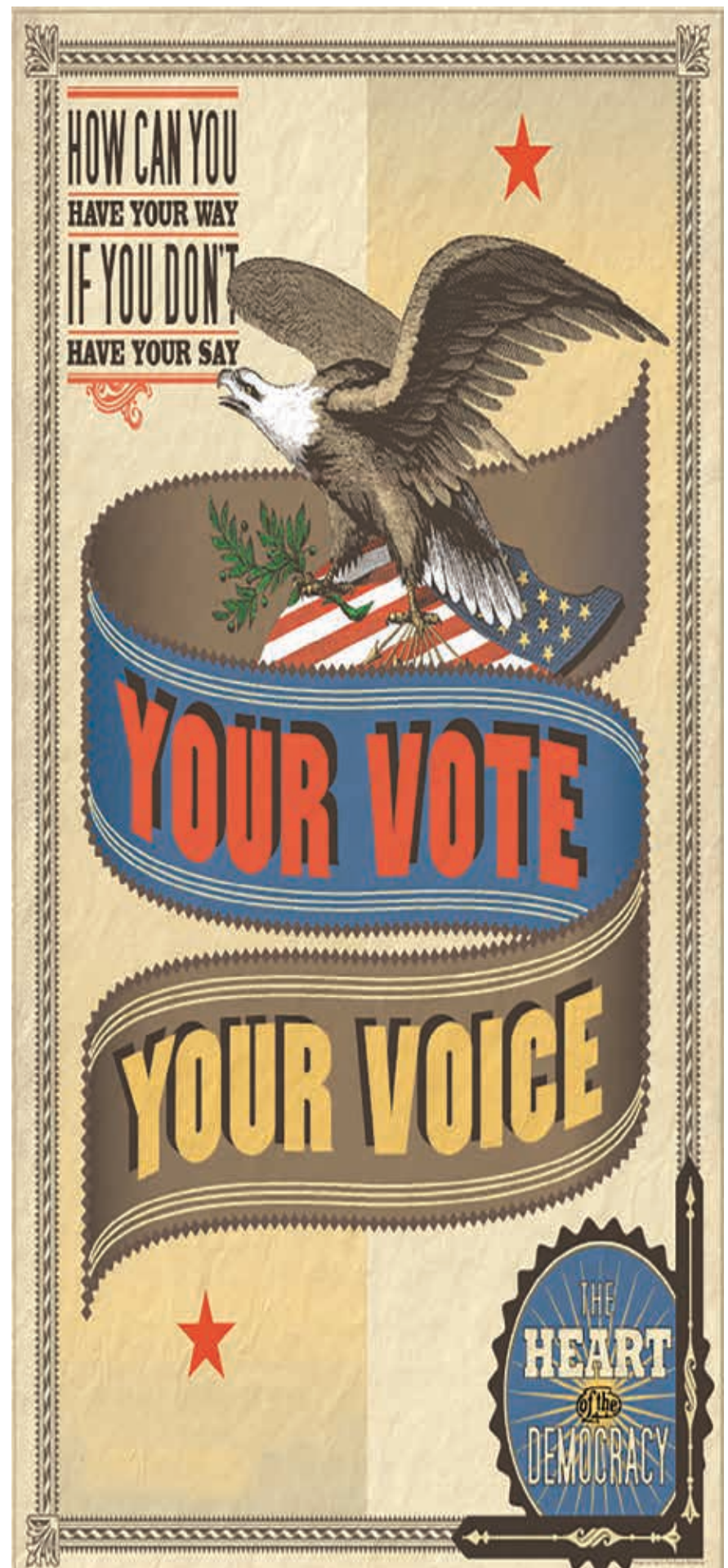
bass player. He could throw down some nice vocal harmonies too. So, we let him stay even though he argued about every song choice, every arrangement, every gig, every dollar of low pay. He was ornery, we knew, because of his constant pain, so as human beings trying to bring joy to others with our music, who were we to judge? I've found him recently on social media, and wouldn't you know it, every single post or comment from him is: ornery.

Once an ornery dude always an ornery dude I reckon.

So in this grouchiest of years that is 2020, I'll continue to try and not be ornery (I don't want that label, no sirree.) This month I'll still cook a turkey with parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme and eat the leftovers for a week. I'll donate a turkey or two. I'll bring some canned goods to the shelters. I'll pray for an end to this thing. I'll think about playing music again. I won't let this thing turn me into that dude.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Peruse more cautionary tales, rants and raves over on my blog "Menhart Musings" at www.suemenhart.wordpress.com. Get my latest book over on Amazon at https://www.amazon.com/They-Made-Me-Play-Polka/dp/1725534584/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=



Tribute to Eddie Van Halen

By John Bennett

I was saddened by the news of the loss on October 6th of Eddie Van Halen. A piece of my life was torn away. A piece of my personal history. I was lucky enough to have personally known a guitar legend. From my first meeting and hearing Eddie play I realized how freaking great he was as a musician. Classically trained but could not read music? Hmmmmmm. Genius? Anyway

On January 28, 1977 I flew from Connecticut to L.A. My good friend Pete Angelus from high school picked me up at the airport. Pete later ended up as lighting director for Van Halen on the road. At one point on the road Van Halen had the most lighting instruments in rock history. The heat on stage was unbearable! Anyway, we are off to the Whiskey A GO-GO. World famous Hollywood club. The Doors use to be the house band. If the walls could talk at the Whiskey? Well on the way to the Whiskey Pete tells me I'm his new assistant from NYC A skilled lighting director from NYC. What a lie and farce!!!! I had no idea what a par can fresnel or ellipsoidal was. Huh?

The Whiskey in 1977 was on fire. Punk had found its way from London to New York and Boston. Landed in Hollyweird. Hollywood had its own twist. The dress was wild. Punk fashion was evolving. Ripped jeans, Black leather jackets, Black garbage bags as a dress. Lots of safety pins. Of course fluorescent hair spiked Mohawks. One afternoon I saw two guys with pierced nipples. They had a chain attached between them. My thought... "Oh that's going to really hurt when something goes wrong on the Mosh Pit floor!!!

Local bands at the Whiskey. The Germs, Joan Jett and the Runaways the Dickies on and on. Among the chaos the Whiskey owner Elmer Valentine and booking agent Marshall Berle booked Van Halen. Sells out immediately. Van Halen was hot. I had no idea. I had never heard them. The afternoon of the load in and sound check I met the band. We had the sound set. Lights all set and focused. Outside in the afternoon there were fans already showing up. One guy I remember was I think the first male.. groupie. This fellow had a beat up old white van with the original VH logo on both sides. I saw him at every show in Hollywood.

All set up for sound check. I meet the band. David Lee Roth the lead singer was pleasant cordial. Almost normal. Within a year he never let down the rock star persona. Full of limerick and rhyme. Years later I barely new him. Michael Anthony the bass player was great! A normal guy. We talked cars, about his 1972 Camaro. Described driving up the coastal highway to Malibu. Far different than the congested L.A. freeways. Alex Van Halen the drummer. We hit it off. Years later he would give me a bear hug to welcome me. I admired his energy, his style, he knew I knew rock drumming. Later on tour when his Drum tech was late for sound check I sat in. Adjusted the mikes for cymbals and each drum. Sound engineer says "Play the Kit" like Alex would. What a great experience. Alex did later forgive me for beating his drums. Last, my Hello to Eddie was short. I told him that Pete and I had set up a special show for the band. More lights an additional followspot and operator, fog machine on and on. Simple. I said "have a great show" He said "Thanks" That's all I had. They were going on stage for soundcheck.

That night the show was packed. Van Halen was great! Eddie's solos were like nothing! I had ever heard! If you have their first album crank it up!!! That was pretty much the show at the Whiskey that night. I was sold. Good power electrifying Rock after years of stagnancy. Soon after Van Halen was signed with Warner Brothers. They went out to support their first album "Van Halen". That first tour they opened many shows. They were the opener under Ronnie Montrose and Journey as headliner. They kicked ass.
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So In conclusion. Yes the Rock World has lost a great guitarist that will truly be missed. His style was amazing, innovative. Guitar solo's and lick's that will live on. When Van Halen comes on my car radio I can't help but to Crank It Up. Maybe drive a little too fast. Sorry Officer I was "Runnin with the Devil"! Thank you Eddie

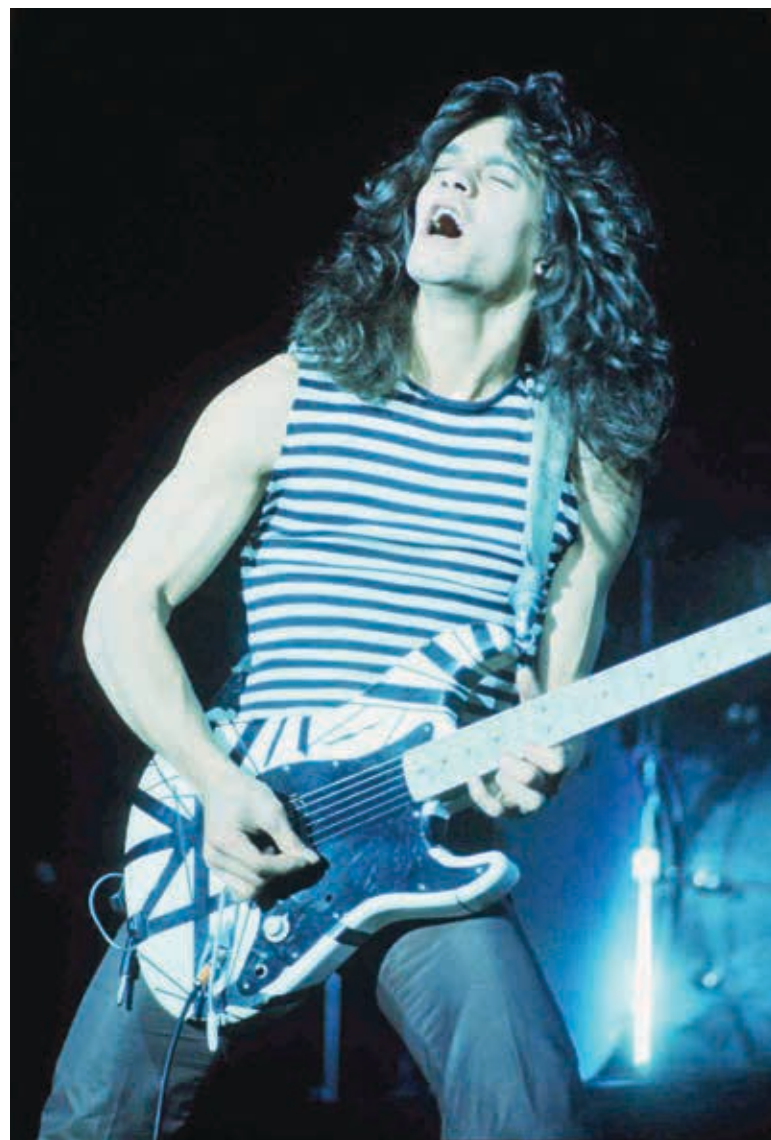


Photo By Carl Lender





BIG LUX

5,6,7 - WaterFire Arts, Providence 7 - 9
8 - Pier 52, Fall River, MA 10am
12 - All Stars Bar, Warwick, RI
21 - 39 West, Cranston, RI 8pm

KEN SERIO JAZZ TRIO

8 - The Stand, Branford, CT

NICK BOSSE

& THE NORTHERN ROOTS

6 - Phoenix, Pawcatuck, CT 8-11pm

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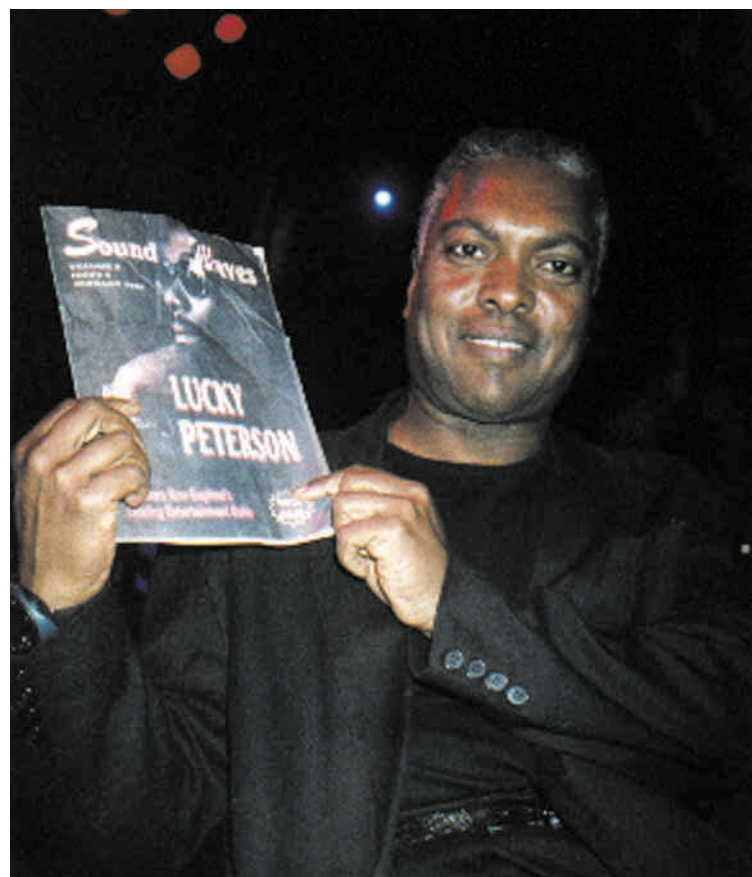


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LOCAL BEAT

“When Van Halen Was Metal, Its Flame Was Still Bright”

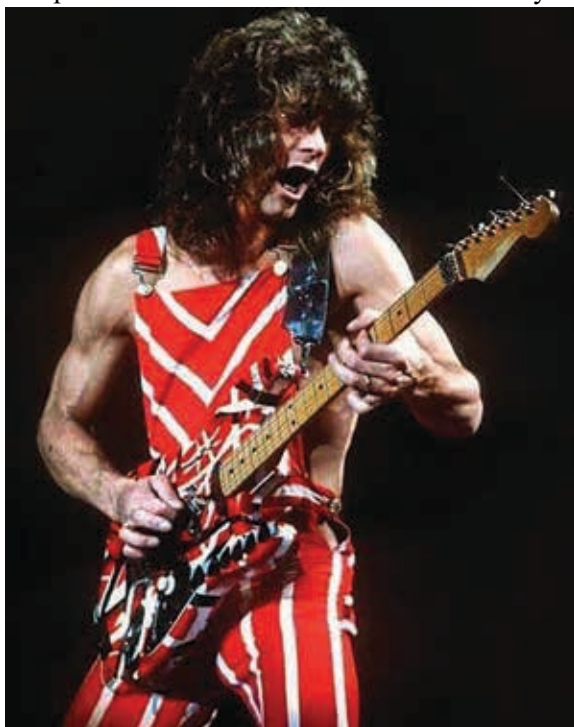
By Andrew Kerbs

Was Van Halen heavy metal? It's hard to say seeing that their fans and those of death metal bands differ in how they define what the genre sounds and looks like. They were pretty metallic back in 1978 when they opened for Journey, comprising the blueprint for what metal should look and sound like. Their singing was just as high as Deep Purple, their hair as long, and their loud guitar solos as drenched in jazz and classical music. Yet their look was slicker and their playing faster: setting the trend for a “new wave” of heavy “speed” metal bands (of which also included Iron Maiden in the UK). Eddie stretched his fingers to play lightning fast classical leads, breaking out of the pentatonic box of the blues scale which had become a cliché after Clapton and Jimmy Page (of Led Zep fame) popularized blues-rock. Guitar genius Steve Vai and even punker Billy Idol lauded Eddie's technique. Blues guitarist Neil Schon of Journey practiced like a madman to keep up with Eddie following their tour together, and Journey's manager knew they had to stay ahead of this new curve if they wanted to stay relevant for rock music into the 1980s. Eddy Van best showcases his skills on his band's self-titled debut album, with “Aint Talkin Bout Love's” loud rhythm guitar bombast and his shredding lead guitar scales on the lead guitar anthem “Eruption.” While most hard rock guitarists from Page to Slash played blues as their backbone for their solos which were more melodic than fast, classical music was the backbone of Van Halen's brand of heavy metal and Ed pushed its speed and volume to



the limit.

Van Halen didn't invent metal. Black Sabbath, Kiss and Aerosmith did that. Furthermore, they were never “death metal,” a trend popularized in the 1990s by some of the more hardcore bands that sprung up in the wake of Metallica. Halen was more melodic and polished, with sharper leads and vocal finesse than



the distorted, noisy death bands that sprung up later. Even Def Lep's singer Joe Elliot replied “Um, no. I'm much more interested in melody,” when asked by Soundwaves if bands such as Slayer ever influenced their hard rock song-writing.

However, Van Halen did influence darker metal bands like Megadeth and what Halen's music lacked in aggressive metal mysticism it made up for in macho headbanging, an appeal to girls and seductive phallic power (as symbolized by extension from his crotch of the neck of Eddie's guitar).

Anyone who thinks guitar was Halen's only strength need only tune into his 1984 album or Unlawful Carnal Knowledge to know what a great keyboardist Eddie was. In addition to being a great guitarist, Van Halen could play great keys. The haunting classical piano opening to the song “Right Now” was an early 90s anthem featured in commercials and sporting events at a time when pop metal music was waning due to the stripped-down ascendancy of “grunge” dominating the airwaves and overshadowing bands like Halen (in addition to dethroning Leppard & Guns and Roses). And Van's synthesizer hook on 1984's “Jump” hit speaks for itself! Flashy clothes and makeovers popularized by Bowie and Kiss was also

sported by Van Halen and bridged the gap between the glam bands of the 70s and MTV-dominated bands of the 1980s (like Twisted Sister and Motley Crue).

A void opened up after singer David Lee Roth's departure from Van Halen in the mid-80s. Eddie and his brother (drummer) Alex Van Halen wanted to audition Steve Perry and Ozzy Osbourne after their departure from Journey and Black Sabbath, respectively. However, the settled on Sammy Hagar and when onto even greater success at the end of the 80s.

What Eddie Van Halen's death represents is the beginning of the death of Heavy Metal, as it was originally experienced, as a cultural force. Yes, there will be an occasionally new rock radio hit or trendy metal band to try to drag the scene above ground but the fragmenta-

tion of the musical genre by the internet starting around 2005 and the diminution of that force across struggling music stores has meant less marketing muscle for any such band to garner popular appeal today (let alone generate national staying power) in the wake of Halen and the metal bands whose trail they blazed.

Perhaps an answer to saving the rock music scene (and stores to which they are linked) lie in proper anti-trust law enforcement. As we speak, a handful of companies control most of US commerce: chiefly tech companies like Amazon, Walmart and Apple but also software like Pandora and Spotify. For artists and musicians to once again make a living and carry the rock n roll torch to future generations there needs to be an album product sold in a more local market with fairer pricing and a more equal playing field. If companies like Amazon, Pandora and the big box wholesalers are not broken up, they at least need to play by the rules instead of shying away from competing with music stores on the street level. State senators should write laws making tech companies pay higher taxes unless they charge fees for streaming or downloading songs. If followed through on, this new status quo would enable music stores and the musicians whose albums they sell to remain competitive with the big tech companies. Were elected officials to compel tech companies to charge \$2 per song, consumers would have just as much incentive to pay for a \$20 album at the local store as they would to download an album of 10 songs (for \$2 per song). Scenes will spring up around town music stores again and generate new metal stars who will take the torch of rockers past (like Eddie) into a new generation. But not until its important enough a tradeoff for music listeners to reboot local music scenes at the street level. Hard rock musicians and fans keep the metal flame flickering but they now more than ever need not just the music, but political activism.



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LARA HERSCOVITCH



By Adrian Webb

I was first introduced to Lara Herscovitch by my publisher David Pottier when he asked me to review her latest album "Highway Philosophers". The following is a partial transcript of my review of Lara's album in the June issue of Sound Waves Magazine...

Connecticut's own, Lara Herscovitch is not a new comer to the entertainment limelight. As a matter of fact one of her claims to fame is when the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism appointed singer-songwriter Lara Herscovitch of Durham, CT as State Troubadour for 2009-2010. A note of great honor of prestige and recognition for any performer. Her latest CD recording titled "Highway Philosophers" marks a departure of her usual status as a solo performer, by adding a backup band. Lara's music is an absolute treat for the ears. As a matter of fact track 14 "From A Dream" affected me so personally and deeply that I had to reach out to the artist only to find a kind hearted and well grounded person behind the music.

Since then we've stayed in touch and had several conversations from her early years to the path she took that led her to be a respected and stellar performer.

Lara, take us back to your early days in social work and where you've been and describe how that path transitioned you from social work to the singer / songwriter you are today?

I'm a musician and artist at my core – but I didn't realize it until I was around 30. I started writing songs when I was nine; music and writing has always been how I make sense of the world. I wrote songs all through high school and would play them for my friends, but that was about it.

I went off to college pre-law. During summers and after graduating, I worked in a big corporate law firm – first in the copy room, then as a litigation paralegal. I got into law school and had a deposit down, but ultimately decided to get a policy social work master's instead.

Then two big things happened that shifted my perspective. One, my mother got diagnosed with lyme disease and multiple sclerosis – I realized how short and truly fragile life is, and promised myself I would live more courageously – I didn't want to leave with any big regretful "what if's" whenever the end arrived. Two, I started working at Save the Children, on a team that focused on increasing access to formal education around the globe. I was sent off on my first long trip overseas; about a month and a half over Christmas and New Year's in the Philippines. I was feeling way out of my element, overwhelmed, and lonely. I went to a party one night, and someone pulled out a guitar and started playing and singing. I watched and felt how quickly and easily it connected us all – total strangers. The same thing happened in Bolivia. I started bringing

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a guitar on all my trips, and eventually mustered up the courage to do an open mic night.

That open mic night was an absolute fork-in-the-road moment. My turn came, I played two songs, and I knew I was home. I've been working to get closer to music ever since.

For the next 17 years or so, I worked full-time in nonprofit organizations. I moved into domestic work so that I could also pursue music. I was focused on community development, environmental protection, and juvenile justice system reform. All while I was recording, serving a term in the honorary position of Connecticut State Troubadour, and performing as much as I could manage. Three years ago, I transitioned to full-time music.

Which artist influenced your writing style, and your performing style?

I'll never be able choose just one. But I can divide your question into fractions!

For writing style, I'd say originally it was James Taylor. I've always adored the honesty of one voice, one guitar and great lyrics and storytelling. But it was the wave of female singer-songwriters in the late '80s and early '90s who helped me see music as a possible career path. Shawn Colvin was my biggest influence in that moment, but also Tracy Chapman, the Indigo Girls, Cheryl Wheeler, Patti Griffin, Lucinda Williams, so many more. One of my albums, *Four Wise Monkeys*, was a concept album inspired by Michael Franti's anti-death penalty album, *Stay Human*. At the time, I was working in juvenile justice system reform, so the themes are related to over-incarceration and over-criminalization in America, the prison industrial complex here and how damaging it has been to so many of us, especially to communities of color.

For performing style, it's a similarly long list – so many great artists, some known, some less-known... Livingston Taylor wrote a great book on Stage Performance that helped shape my performing early on; Bobby McFerrin – he's so courageous and faithful; Cheryl Wheeler – for her mixing of the profound and poetic and personal alongside the totally silly; Steve Earle – for his honesty and conviction and total belief in the song; I could go on and on and on.

For balancing music with another career, it's Ruben Blades, hands down. He's been a real inspiration and role model all these years. I used to feel like I was a failure because I wasn't full-time; he showed me the ways we all get to be more than one thing, contribute our skills in many different ways.

Where does your creativity inspiration come from?

I believe all humans are creative in one form or another – whether it's music or painting or cooking or architecture or so many other forms. But our culture has professionalized the arts in a way that so many people feel excluded or distant from their own playful, free creative expression. It took me a while to get here, but at this point, it's clear to me that I see the world very much through a creative and artist's lens. Getting to your question, this means I can find inspiration in pretty much anything – the mundane to the profound. The way leaves on a certain tree hang, a storm rolling through, a relationship, politics and culture, or a line at the DMV. Right now I'm working on two different songs – one is COVID-19 inspired, about not being able to be with a loved one when they pass; the other one is from the perspective of a horse on a historic carousel.

Do you feel more satisfaction from writing, recording, or performing on stage?

My answer to most questions is, "it depends." Depends on the writing
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process for any given song, or the partners in the recording studio and the particular day, or the venue and audience and what's happening that night, solo or alongside other musicians. Honestly, I love them all – they're just different.

But I guess since you asked about satisfaction, I'd say performing – because that's a moment of live connection, delivering a song to someone's mind or heart or soul, spirit. I would write songs even if I couldn't record or perform – it's like breathing, I just write because I do. But when I can be in a room and deliver a song that helps someone, or brings joy, or some emotion, when a song does the work that it's here to do and I can be the one to deliver that to someone, that's pretty terrific. To have a positive impact on another person through a song? Doesn't get better than that.

In the past my answer probably would have been studio recording, because my skills were wobbly and it was easier to shine in a more controlled setting. Plus I truly love the collaborative process, making and capturing music together with others. I think as I've gotten better, more polished, more aware of how to fix things that start to go off the rails, live performance is more fun now. Because I can let go and be in the moment, really be in the song and not preoccupied by technical stuff. And COVID-19 has really helped me understand the importance of connection through live performance in a way that I didn't before.

When you sing it sounds as if you over-articulate your words. Is that done on purpose or does it come naturally?

That's interesting – no, it's not on purpose. I have done a lot of public speaking in my nonprofit career, maybe it comes from that, I don't know. Maybe it's more of a norm in my genre. I've heard people tell me they appreciate being able to hear the lyrics. I try to write lyrics that stand alone as poetry, even if I'm not singing the song; lyrics are really important to me.

*Let's talk about your work, how do you feel your music and writing has evolved from your *Through A Frozen Midnight Sky* album in 2009 to your current body of work *Highway Philosophers* in 2020 and where do you feel your music direction will take you next?*

My first album came out in 2000 – I'd say I rushed the first two, like I was running some kind of race, thinking every two years for an album was expected or required. Now I understand it's a marathon, not a sprint.

I'm a much better, more patient writer now. I've always tried to live by that Ray Charles quote: "I never wanted to be famous, I only wanted to be great." My goal is to get great, regardless of external outcome. I'm always learning and growing – whether in poetry writing, or singing, or guitar, or performing – I always want to improve. So today, my songs are better, more intentional, as is my playing and performing. I try not to judge my former work – I did the best I could at the time with the resources I had, same as now.

It's so hard to predict what the future holds – it's hard for all of us in the arts right now. I look forward to touring, playing live, continuing to write and record. I've always been moved and inspired by great songwriting regardless of genre; I don't think that will change.

Musically speaking how have you experimented with other genres, or how do you plan to in the future? Will we hear you touching on jazz or blues influences, or perhaps transitioning from acoustic to electric guitar on a few tracks of your next cd?

That's a tough one to predict. Trying to parse the details of genre sometimes feels to me like asking a fish to understand the different elements of water. The fish feels the whole, the 'wet,' the home, and the musician feels

the larger home of music. Having said that, for sure there's a clear through-line of singer-songwriter-newfolk-Americana. But it has been rewarding and fun flavoring that core visiting some neighborhoods of other genres.

When I first started recording, I had just left Save the Children, where I worked often in Latin America. So there was a strong Latin influence – my first album was called Sin Tierra, and my first three albums included some original, Spanish-language songs and incorporated some Latin rhythms. For my second album, also recorded with friend and fellow former Connecticut State Troubadour Pierce Campbell, we went more in the direction of indie-singer-songwriter. After that was Juror Number 13, which was more jazz-flavored. The next three were more singer-songwriter-folk – Through A Frozen Midnight Sky and Four Wise Monkeys were produced by the late great John Jennings, and MISFiT was co-produced with Adam Michael Rothberg in Cambridge. The most recent one, co-produced with Stephen Murphy, took more of a turn towards newfolk-Americana.

Some of that was in the writing – rhythms, styles – but some of it was also production. At the center of it all, regardless of the details of genre flavors, is the song. One song I'm working on now could go in so many different directions – different meters, rhythm, tempo – the trick is to know when to lead it somewhere, and when to follow it.

What projects are you working on currently?

It's been an incredible year in so many ways – and by “incredible,” I mean hard to believe. Since COVID-19 took over the world in mid-March, I've been releasing my new album Highway Philosophers in unexpected ways. It took a lot longer than normal because most radio stations were closed, as were venues. Many, of course, still are and will be for the foreseeable future. So for much of the spring and summer I was focused on getting the album out into the world – whether to those who pledged for it on Kick-

starter, or DJs, or media.

It has been a year of learning about the tech side – sound and lighting – so that home-based concerts sound and look good. All of us performing musicians now know the ins and outs of all the different platforms, what works, what doesn't work as well. And then learning it again, as the platforms evolve themselves.

At the moment, I'm launching a Kickstarter campaign to turn a storysong into an inspiring storybook. Shine Sister Shine is a song about being who you are, doing what you love, and sharing your super powers. It's written from the perspective of the sun; she's tired of having to shine all the time. She applies for a bunch of other jobs but gets turned down, and by the end of the song she remembers why she loves her work. Matt Rasch created a really cute animated music video for it, which will make a great picture book if the campaign is successful.

I'm also having a lot of fun becoming my own percussionist. I have a new piece of live sound gear that allows me to play percussion, lay down a groove, then play the song to that groove, stopping and starting it where it makes sense for the song. There's the ability to also harmonize vocally, but I'm staying with percussion first so I can use it competently – I'd rather get good at one thing first, then be bad at two!

I'm working on a new music video with a filmmaker in Boston. We shot last week in The Kate – the Katharine Hepburn Memorial Theater in Old Saybrook CT – such a beautiful theater and it felt so good to sing in that space again. It was a special day; it was the first time any of the three of us had been in a theater since COVID-19 closed everything down. And while she was sitting in the lighting booth, our Lighting Director Jiyoung Chang found out she had been nominated for a Tony Award for Slave Play by Jeremy O. Harris – along with 11 other nominations for the play.

Lara, thank you for sharing and allowing our readers to get to know you better. We are all looking forward to your next project.

HOLIDAY GIFT SPECIAL: As a “friend” of Sound Waves Magazine, Lara has generously consented to an exclusive offer to our readers. Anyone who mentions they are a Sound Waves reader from her website can buy Two of Lara's CD's and will get the Third at 50% OFF. All of Lara's works and other merchandise can be found at LaraHerscovitch.com.



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HEARING AID



Rodney Rice

"Same Shirt, Different Day"

Moody Spring Music

Colorado-based Americana singer-songwriter Rodney Rice has got a few things to say on his sophomore album "SAME SHIRT, DIFFERENT DAY" but he does it with such humility, straightforwardness and so matter-of-factly, that you don't even realize how profound his points are until you reflect for a moment, which is exactly the stuff that makes for an everlasting and important songwriter. He's like a brand-new John Prine, and we're all the better for it. Produced and engineered at Congress House Studio in Austin, Texas the themes on the album, woven in with top-notch musicianship and perfectly crafted songs include: the working class, anti-current administration, anti-corporate and the dreary lives of coal miners, to name a few, resulting in an all-encompassing exploration of the human condition.

The opener "Ain't Got a Dollar" features slide guitars and B3 accentuated by Rice's laid-back John Prine-like vocals. Not sugar coating anything, the radio-ready and simply beautiful song "Hard Life" warns "You gotta fight for the beauty in this world." The upbeat "Free at Last" features dobro, fiddle and mandolin in a freeing shuffle. "Can't Get Over Her" is old-style country with some pedal steel. The ode to the environment "Pillage and Plunder" has some fantastic lyrical gymnastics. "Middle Managed Blues" is a bluesy dig at corporate America's

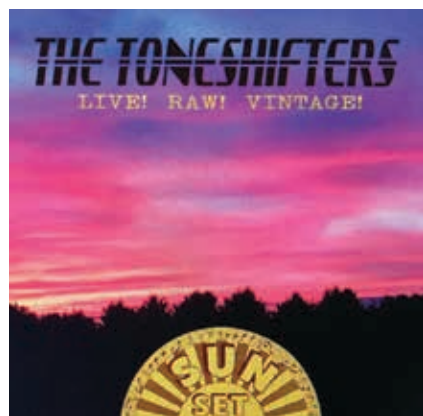
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propensity for putting workers through performance reviews. Some sweet background harmonies from Bonnie Whitmore on "Walk Across Texas" match the pining for someone lyrics "I'd drink the whole muddy river for you." The slow and swingy New Orleans-style "Company Town" features Wurlitzer, trumpet and sax in this coal mining song. "Right to be Wrong" is sweet and simple with more lyrical acrobatics. Rice digs deep on the nostalgic "Memoirs of Our Youth" complete with imagery of a simpler time, some talk-singing storytelling and suggests we "Keep looking on the bright side of every rainy day." "Rivers Run Backwards" is an instant country classic anthem sing-along. The closer is Rice's introspective look at his whole life with an aim for positivity looking forward in "Don't Look Back." Personally, I am looking forward to more from Rodney Rice, a gem of a songwriter.

Link:

<http://www.Rodneyrice.com>

- Sue Menhart



The Toneshifters

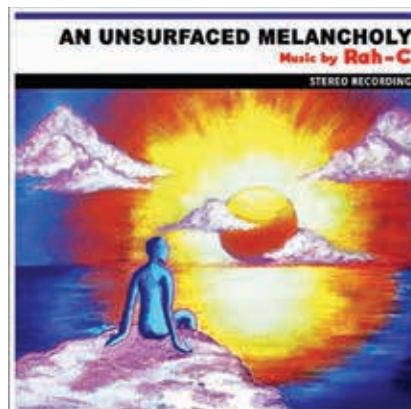
"Live! Raw! Vintage!"

The Toneshifters' new release, Live! Raw! Vintage, is a four-track EP recorded on vintage equipment which captures the remarkable virtuosity of this five-member band. In fact one has to think that the driving purpose behind this recording was to demonstrate just how diverse the band's talents truly are, in ways which can perhaps be best appreciated by other musicians, who will understand the difficulty of switching from one nuanced style to another and to do it well, live, and raw.

The first track, Jitterbug, captures the sound and style of late '40's to mid '50's dance music, complete with hollow-body electric guitar, lots of rhythmic, chord-rich melody, and, one assumes, a stand-up bass. There is an intensity and energy that conjures images of young people enjoying a Saturday night on the dance floor, while V-8 Fords and Chevrolet's wait outside in patient rows. The next track, Coming Back To You, is a New Orleans French Quarter Zydeco number, complete with accordion over the bass with that unmistakable hustling shuffle beat. The singer announces he is Coming Back To You, if just for one night.

Seen Some Things is a blues-rock song that recites in rapid sequence the good and bad things that have happened in his life ("made some cash, lost my shirt"). The EP closes with a fast paced, drums driven, rocking gospel tent revival number, each verse ending with Jesus' Got My Back now. This collection is a fun listen throughout, living up to the Toneshifter name as the band moves easily and masterfully between styles, making it all sound so easy which, assuredly, it is not. More info may be found at www.toneshifters.com.

- Jon Persson



Rah-C

"An Unsurfaced Melancholy"

Rah-C Music

Rah-C is a talented young artist from New York who has turned his aspiring hip-hop career down a path towards indie-rock with his new self-published release entitled "An Unsurfaced Melancholy". It's full of catchy riffs, shifting musical landscapes and introspective lyrics touching on his feelings of doubt, fear and optimism. In his own words, "it was a world I could escape to."

This 10 song album is dense with twisting backgrounds, moments of

arpeggiated acoustic guitar, hip-hop breaks and some really nice vocal work delivered with his own brand and style. It's not a fast paced album, but it has a way of sucking you in and making the time fly.

The album opens with "Sooner or Later", a dreamy number that kicks off without rhythm and spaces out until the second verse where the beat kicks in. It does a good job of setting expectations for the rest of the album, running the gamut from light and airy to ending up with a punchy beat and fun hook. Like the album title indicates, there surely are a myriad of unsorted and unsurfaced feelings bubbling through the surface as we discover them in the lyrics song by song.

"Back from My Lowest" sounds like the first single from this collection. It kicks off with a strong, straight beat and the music shares ground with some of the indie-rock greats like Tame Impala or Phoenix. Front and center is Rah-C's vocals both belting it out in the chorus and then getting quiet and ghostly on the breaks. There's a well placed bridge where he raps out for a minute before slamming back into the main hook.

Another one of my favorites is "It Won't Matter in the End". The music has a strong vibrato to it and an interesting chord progression. There's a fat vocal section in the chorus as he echoes the song title in a melodic falsetto and verses that flow into it like a river.

The album takes a brilliant turn for the pensive on "Til the Embers". It's a beautiful, sensitive song that reminds me of something touching on Sufjan Stevens or Bon Iver. It's stripped of all the heavy production elements other than some spacey reverb and really contrasts with the rest of the album in a strong way. It feels like a bold move, and one that pays off with dividends.

"Over Exposed" hits hard and fast with a slow tempo but fast paced lyrics in the verse and a pounding beat, but then ends up in free space for the chorus break for some more airy vibes creating a lush atmosphere.

All in all I feel like this young talent has really hit a creative stride with this album. You can tell the ideas are fresh and strongly inspired, and his energy really shines through. The production elements are super dank and though somewhat unconventional compared to traditional rock music, it fits right in with the modern indie-rock genre and the sonic experimentation that goes along with it. I highly recommend checking out Rah-C and his new album

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“An Unsurfaced Melancholy”.

- **Tom Matthew**
Two Ton Music



**Danny Brooks &
Lil Miss Debi**
“Are You Ready”
His House Records

Greg Martin of the Kentucky Headhunters describes Danny Brooks as “Driving out of Memphis on a sunny Saturday morning into the Mississippi Delta”, and Kyle Lehning: Producer/Randy Travis says “Danny Brooks and Lil Miss Debi’s is as authentic as it gets. Real music that speaks soul to soul!” As I listen to his album “Are You Ready” for the third time and enjoying every bit of it, I describe the overall sound as organic. You can feel the truth in his music. No pitch correction or studio manipulation here. Instead you get the feel of a live Blues performance.

Brooks is known as a blues and gospel blues artist. His music reflects influences drawn from bluegrass, country and R&B. He has released nine albums in his more than 40 years as a performer. Brooks and his band have performed at blues festivals across North America, including at the televised Austin City Limits Music Festival and the Beaches International Jazz Festival in Toronto. October 2012 saw the release of “Texasassippi Soul Man”, Brooks first effort since moving south to Llano, Texas

His Awards Include: Blues Hall of Fame 2009 Blues Ambassador to Ontario, Canada. CGMA Covenant Awards 2006 nominee, Best Jazz/Blues Album of the Year: Soulsville: Rock This House. Independent Music Awards 2008 nominee, Favourite Blues Artist/Group or Duo of the Year Shai Awards 2007 Best Jazz/Blues Album Of The Year: Soulsville: Rock This House.

Let’s dive into the album musicians
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which include Brothers Joel & Micah May - Drums & Bass, Chalmers Davis - B3/Wurlitzer, Sam Brady - B3/Piano/Rhodes, Professor Andrew Lewis - B3/Piano Greg Martin - Guitar/Slide, John Fannin - Guitar/Slide, Vocals - Debi Brooks, Rusty Weir & Jerry Jeff Walker. Geri O’Neil - Bass/Vocals. Horns - James Lawlis, Horns/Clarinet/Flute, Paul Mitchel, Trumpet & Peter Hysen, Tuba.

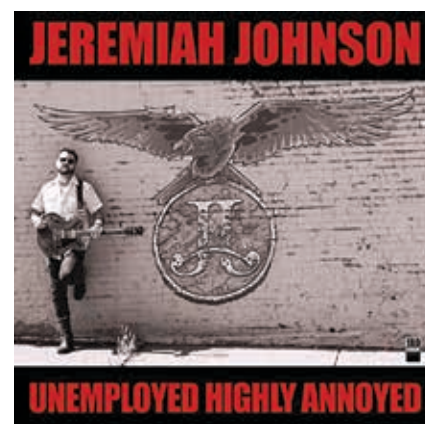
As for the cd “Are You Ready”, Brooks offers his listeners a very generous TWENTY track compilation of several genre inspired music that he is known for such as the many different styles of Blues, a little Gospel, and even a Jamaican reggae inspired song. There is something for everyone in this album and it’s all good. On the title track 1 “Are You Ready” Brooks comes out swinging with an upbeat blues rendition with a great driving beat, great guitar leads and a light sprinkling from the horn section. Track 3 “Jamaican Sun” is a fun reggae inspired song that is best played while on the beach with a cold one in your hand. On this track Brooks distinct raspy voice and backup vocals along with the blues harp and horns take center stage. A fun song that will put anyone in the groove. On track 5 “Let Me Know” is a certified stand up and testify Gospel song that will get everyone on their feet. Danny, if you are reading this, adding a church choir as back up singers would be a real show stopper. On track 7 “Angels From Montgomery” Brooks gives the lead vocals to his wife Lil Miss Debi (Brooks) and Danny does backup vocals. The excellent harp playing adds a cowboy on the prairie feel. Track 11 “Where Will You Stand” is a soulful rendition with a strong Bruce Springsteen feel to it. I can easily see Springsteen doing this song. As a matter of fact Brooks even sounds like Springsteen on this song. Talk about different? Track 15 is titled “Put A Little Rock & Roll In Your Soul” but if you listen it’s more like what would be played at a country ho-down. Ever been to a country ho-down?? Me either, but this is the knee slapping, hay in the barn kinda music I would imagine played there. Track 19 “When I’m Holding You” is an easy going love ballad where Brooks sings his sentiment for his wife Lil Miss Debi. I think it’s safe to say that anyone who learns and sings this song to their significant other would earn countless brownie points...

Lastly we have track 20 “The Battle”, one of my favorites. Every time it re-

minds me of the Blues Brothers movie at the end where the band is playing “Minnie The Moocher” with Cab Calloway. All aspects of Brooks great band is highlighted here. From the 1920’s style horn arrangement underscored by a tuba no less to great harmonica and guitar leads throughout. What does this mean? An instant smile as your head starts bobbing to the beat. Love it. One final note that needs mentioning in creating a successful 20 track album is not only the music itself but where each song is positioned to maintain listener interest and Brooks did a great job. As I said in my intro, the cd has a little something for everyone and its all good!! The cd “Are You Ready” can be found at DannyBrooksMusic.com and as you probably guessed by now – I highly recommend it.

Until Next Time

- **Adrian Webb**



Jeremiah Johnson
“Unemployed Highly Annoyed”
Ruf Records

“I wrote nearly every line of the lyrics to these songs while on hold with the unemployment office,” says Jeremiah Johnson of his latest album, Unemployed Highly Annoyed. It is a burst of creativity born in the early months of the Covid 19 lockdown, part of an emerging crop of pandemic driven expression. But Jeremiah can be forgiven if he feels especially aggrieved by the sudden change in every vestige of normalcy; for, his year began with the release of an album called Heavens To Betsy, which quickly rose to number three on the Billboard Blues Album chart. As more than seventy shows were booked on a European tour, the album rose to number one on April 11. Out of this contrasting experience came a new song, in classic blues style com-

plete with bends, lifts and slides on the guitar, with verses such as “I’ve been locked up too long, I’m almost homeless baby, broke as a blues man can be, somebody had a Different Plan For Me.”

In all, seven original songs grace this new album (plus a cover of Cherry Red Wine). Each of the seven addresses an aspect of lockdown, the frustrations with bureaucracy (“you can’t call it freedom if you don’t have a choice; Unemployed and Highly Annoyed”) to hope amid the despair on Burn Down The Garden (“seems like the whole world is breaking down, I’ve got a feeling it’ll come around”). On the cover of Luther Allison’s Cherry Red Wine, Johnson let’s his guitar run loose and wild over an agitated blues foundation, on this well chosen number about watching someone waste away the days while drinking too much wine.

Jeremiah Johnson was aiming for a raw, live sound for this album, recorded with guitar plugged directly into his amp, backed only by Tony Antonelli on drums and Paul Niehaus on bass and keys. The album was recorded in just three days, May 23 to 25, at a time when the pandemic was hugely disruptive yet seemingly with an end in sight. As the lockdown stretches ever further into the uncertain future, songs like Love and Sympathy become ever more prescient, written about the art of living in close quarters with loved ones as the weeks stretch ever further into months.

Unemployed Highly Annoyed is a skillfully performed, honest, and real time blues perspective on the great trial of our time. More info may be found at www.jeremiahjohnsonband.com.

- **Jon Persson**



Billy J
“Rise Above”

The cover art on Billy J’s album, Rise Above, is a depiction of the artist knee deep in flood waters which are being driven by storm winds that flail and

bend distant palm trees, as his hands stretch imploringly to the perilous skies above. It is a reference, one presumes, to the storms which loom and lash the coast of Billy J's adopted home of South Florida. Or, it may be a pronouncement of the storm unleashed on this first album by the guitarist, singer, and songwriter. Either way, Billy J has entered the arena of blues-rock albums with a mix of raw and finessed electric and acoustic guitar, and songs which range from philosophical to more than a little bawdy.

The album opens with a fuzzed out guitar and organ on She's Mine, quickly moving into a guitar solo over thundering bass and percussion. Here the guitar is raw, powerful, yet controlled, well matched to Billy J's lightly seasoned vocals. Sweaty Melons is a swamp blues, bass driven and overflowing with plays on words and images. The title track, Rise Above, is by contrast an acoustic backed piece with fiddle, starting slow and low key in the face of life's troubles, the music intensifying as "all the problems fade away, you know you finally found a way;" ending with the hopeful, "you finally Rise Above." It is a good song and welcome thought for these times.

The song New Car is a nice, bluesy piece, the guitar edgy and fully present over the tongue in cheek "Got a new car for my woman last week, best trade I ever made." A cover of Harry Chapin's Cats In The Cradle translates nicely as a gruff, bluesy number, from the perspective of a blues man always on the road as his son grows to adulthood.

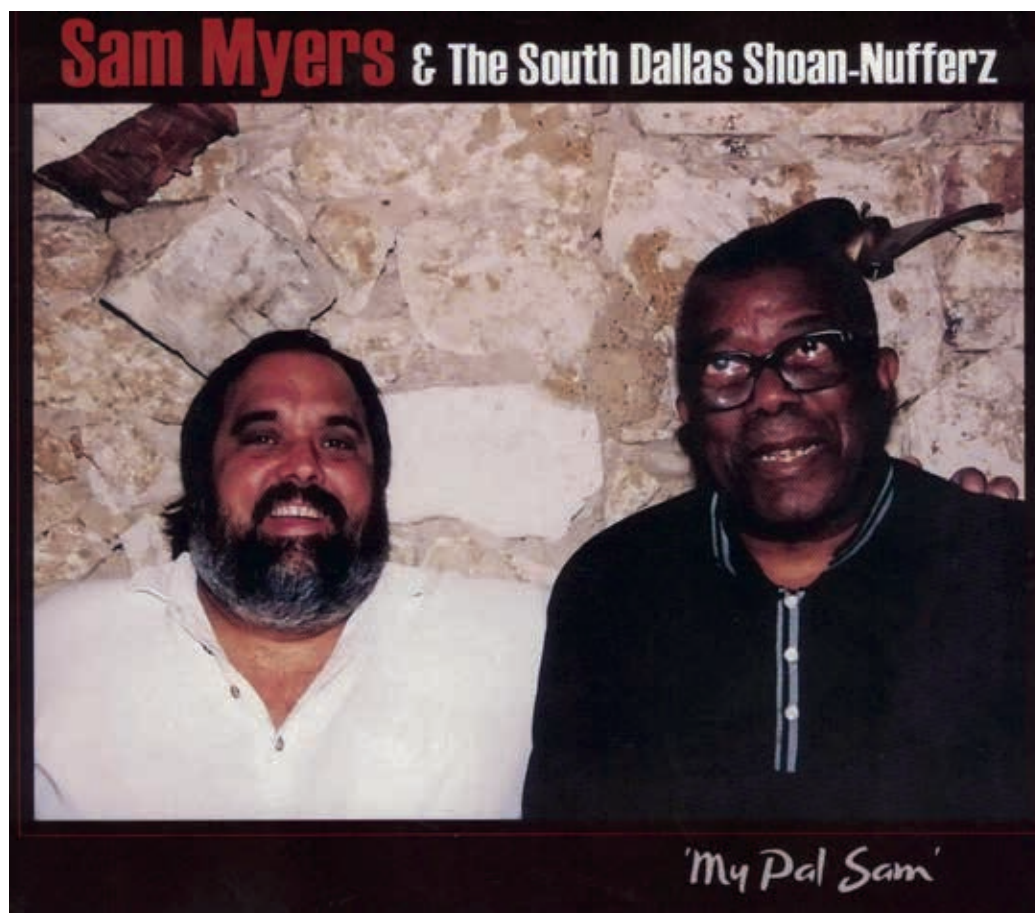
This is a solid first effort at recording for Billy J, whose talents are well supported by the fine skills of the late Yonrico Scott on drums, with Charlie Wooten and Todd Smallie sharing bass tracks, while Dave Fields produced the album. More info may be found at www.billyjjams.com.

- Jon Persson



18 SOUND WAVES

Cooking with the Blues CD: Sam Myers & the South Dallas Shoan-Nufferz



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COOKING WITH THE BLUES

By Jack Chaplin

2020 has been one upside down crazy year. I was scheduled to have Triple Bypass surgery at Yale in March, but I didn't want to be locked down, not be able to have my loved ones visit, and then possible rehab where the virus was spreading like wildfire. Things cooled down, and I decided to have it done in late September. It was a huge step for me, and I was still looking for a way out but went ahead with it and have been home recouping. I'm not sure how long it fully takes to recover, and everyone is different, but LaKisha calls me R.J. - Remarkable Jack. As a matter of fact, they let me out six days after the surgery. One day home, I had a taste for good ole chicken wild rice soup, and I whipped up a batch; I call it my "Kitchen Conditioning." It gets me up, moving around. I have worked 60 hours plus during most of my working life, even during high school. I have worked many years 90 plus hours a week in most of my adult life, sometimes seven days a week in this crazy business. I decided to ease my way into retirement, and it seems that this virus has given me a clear path. I have been keeping myself busy and have grown to cherish my non regimented work week, having days to do what ever the hell I want. The restaurant is operating, but with the cases rising, the big question is will we survive into the winter. As they say, time heals all, and we have to see what the future holds.

I'm writing this a few days before the Presidential election, and I've never seen this great country of ours so divided. Without getting political, it is truly amazing how polarized we are from each other, how different our views and beliefs are. Whoever gets elected has got a real storm ahead to deal with. Be-

20 SOUND WAVES



fore the surgery, of course, I thought about the what-ifs. I would look at each day as it could be my last, and I made my peace. I soak up all the goodness that this life and each day has given me. I got "Good With God" and felt good about having my surgery. I didn't want to think about it; I left it up to the Lord and the wonderful doctors at Yale; I was in their hands. I went to sleep, and I woke up, and I am so thankful to be here still. My advice is to turn off the news, just get the facts, and don't waste your days fretting and worrying. Help your fellow man out whenever possible, it all starts here in our little circle, and the rest will get figured out. Spread love, a positive message, and peace.

That recent light snow and the first hard frost is our intro to the winter season; grab that sunshine whenever you can. I now have time to read, which I always loved about winter; it makes us slow down and relax. No more yard work and days filled with things to do. I had read a book review about the new book out, Levon. I regret that I never got a chance to visit his place near Woodstock for one of his barn

bashes. I called the Waterford Library and asked if, by chance, they had a copy which they didn't, and there wasn't one in the system that searches the libraries throughout Ct. I was told that sometimes Waterford would purchase a requested book, and they would look into it. A week later, I got a notification that indeed the book was in! This is such a great thing that Waterford and our state of CT offers; I was so pleased! The book was fantastic, and I highly recommend it. By the way, Robbie Robinson is a great guitarist but a real asshole as a human being. Last week I called the information desk again and asked for a recommendation. The fine lady said The White City was a favorite, and she located an available copy from the Groton Library. Three days later, it was available for pick up! One of the best books that I have read!

We haven't gone out to eat in a long while and decided to go to Olio in Groton for a special meal. I wanted to go there and kept up with chef/owner Jason Kowalski's food posts on Facebook. We went early

for a late lunch early dinner. They have an extensive menu plus a daily special list. Olio has a menu that everything sounds good. Linda, our waitress, brought out some crispy hot focaccia, delicious with oil and parmesan dipping, but I had to hold back and save room. We ordered the Meatball Salad to start, a few small meatballs over a nice tossed salad. Next was an order of Coconut Shrimp w/ a sweet and sour dipping sauce. Three Jumbo beauties fried to perfection. I even ate the crispy tails. LaKisha ordered the Endive Salad w/ Figs, Oranges, Pomegranate, Blue Cheese, and Grilled Salmon. Delicious! I would go back for just that! I ordered the Crab Cakes w/ Lobster Sauce and Dauphinoise Potatoes. Out came two large cakes loaded w/ Crab Meat, the sauce was nice and rich. The potatoes thinly sliced layered w/ cheese and cream, my favorite preparation which you never see on menus! I could have eaten a whole plate, and I did ask for an order to go. I could only eat one cake; the other took a ride home with us. Of course, we saved room



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for dessert - Blueberry Ice Cream and Oatmeal Cookie Sandwich. We devoured the ice cream and took most of the cookie home, so tasty! Linda was so nice and gave us a scoop of ice cream to take home, along with the rest, in our doggie bag. It was a great time to have a great meal out; we will surely be back and request Linda! Congratulations to Jason and Co. for such high standards, delicious food, and drinks at Olio.

Well, this Thanksgiving month and my favorite holiday, we are not sure what the plan is. Like the other upcoming holidays, I think we will have a quiet one here at the house to keep things safe. I wish you all well and find joy wherever possible. Love the ones you're with and reach out to friends and family, keep them in your thoughts and prayers. I plan to write a few letters a week, it's a lost art these days, but I sure do love getting one; I just hope they can read my handwriting!

As Mark Cuban once asked, "What skills did you add during the pandemic?" I have finally packaged my Daddy Jack's 'Blackened Seasoning' with all this time on my hands. At the restaurant, I use it on everything; chicken, pork, fish, steak, and vegetables. I even use it in my soups and sauces. I have thought for years to market it, many people have asked for it over the years, so here it is. I have it available at Fiddleheads Food Co-op here in New London and online. I was also able to produce "My Pal Sam"- an album that I recorded over 20 years ago in Dallas with the great Sam Myers, a nine-time W.C. Handy award winner. Lucky Peterson played on the sessions and some of the finest musicians in the country, The South Dallas Shoan-Nufferz, and the great Gregg A. Smith. Joe Jonas sang the last song "Sleeping In The Ground" for Sam, his best friend. Sam wrote the song back in 1958 when he was a drummer for Elmore James. It was recorded by Blind Faith and many others over the years, but this one is ultra special. This was a labor of love, and it's been a blessing to me; we captured history. Sam passed a few years ago, Joe not long after, Lucky has just recently passed as well; God Rest Their Souls.

*I Wish You All Good Health and A Happy Thanksgiving
Jack*

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SLEEP'S DARK AND SILENT GATE **Continued**

He knew where the master was because he wrote the song with Steve and Muff Winwood, original members of the Spencer Davis Group. The song, along with "I'm a Man" and "Somebody Help Me," were among hits for the band.

In 1984, Davis seemed energized by working on an updated version of "Gimme Some Lovin'" for his "Crossfire" album.

The artist said at the time that the song had been covered so many times by other artists – eventually including Traffic, the Grateful Dead, Queen, Chicago, Olivia Newton-John, the Blues Brothers, the James Gang, Hanson, the 4 Tops, Vanilla Fudge, Book T. and the MG's and the Dixie Dregs, among many others – that his new interpretation was not an attempt to be faithful to the original.

"I felt we could improve on it," he explained. "I thought it could go into a new era, a new field. (The original) might have sounded somewhat tired. I think this version is interesting enough to get to new people who have never heard the original."

HE WAS ALL IN

Since he had been enjoying his role of helping to guide other artists in the studio, Davis said, "There wasn't a burning desire (for me) to make another album. But when I started recording, I felt it was time to throw myself into it wholeheartedly."

As an A&R man behind-the-scenes, Davis said he found satisfaction "in seeing something you worked on and believed in and seeing the people you worked with get the recognition... You always learn from some of the younger acts, especially when they bring some of their new technology with them."

He began doing some limited touring at the time, explaining, "I like to play in medium-sized clubs so that I can actually get across to an audience."

Davis added, "I think intimacy is really important, being in front of the audience and letting them see that's what you look like and you're not disguised by distance. I think that's what happened in the '70s stadium rock. You never actually saw your idols."

Those who were close to Davis speak of his kindness, generosity, warmth and humor.

"He was a purist about music," said Jim Simpson, founder of the Birmingham International Jazz Festival.

"Spencer was scholarly and well educated and his tastes in music were spot on," his longtime agent Bob Birk said.

MAC DAVIS: HE BELIEVED IN MUSIC

(Mac Davis died Sept 29, 2020, at the age of 78 of complications from heart surgery.)



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Tears began to well in Elvis Presley's eyes as he listened to Mac Davis sing that day long ago in Presley's Los Angeles home.

"I was singing a song for him I wrote called 'Don't Cry Daddy' the Lubbock, Texas artist recalled. "He got big tears in his eyes and said, 'Someday I'm gonna record it for my daddy.'"

Presley did just that and it became one of three hits he had with Davis compositions. The other two were "Memories" and "In the Ghetto," the latter tune which Davis said "opened up the doors to me."

We spoke on one of the anniversaries of the King's death.

Davis was 15 when he first heard Presley sing in Davis' native Lubbock, Texas.

Presley performed that day from a make-shift stage in an outdoor parking lot. He probably received about \$75 for it, Davis estimated, and he remembered Presley wiggling and shaking "and every kid in town trying to do that."

ELVIS WAS ON HIS MIND

When Davis first started in the music business, he wrote all of his songs with Presley in mind.

But it was not until 1966, when Davis moved to Hollywood to head Liberty Records' music publishing company, that he actually was able to make a connection with Presley.

He was asked if he would like to write songs for a Presley movie. Davis penned "A Little Less Conversation" and "Live A Little, Love A Little," the first of several songs he would pen for Elvis films. He authored "Memories" for a Presley television special and it became Davis' first major hit.

Davis agreed that as a songwriter it is a tremendous source of pride to have had such legends as Presley and Frank Sinatra record his music. He added, though, "when you think of it in today's terms, you're still trying to come up with a hit for Bruce Springsteen. I'd love to hear him do his version of 'In the Ghetto.' The lyrics remain true today.

HARD TO BE FRIENDS

As to if Davis eventually developed a friendship with Presley, he offered, "I don't think anybody did. I was around him on a few occasions over the years. I went to his home in Los Angeles and the legendary Memphis Theater after hours to watch movies with him.

"But to really get close to him, you had to go through the so-called Memphis mafia. You never got close to him to talk privately without a bunch of people around him. I think that contributed to his early demise."

Davis seemed to have no intention of letting his own career control him as it did Presley's. In fact, he looked to Perry Como as a career role model, saying, "I want to be like him, to grow old gracefully. He's still working, people still love him and he hasn't changed a bit. Rather than changing with the times, he's rolling with the flow."

Besides being a successful singer-songwriter, Morris Mac Davis also was an actor and hosted his own TV show.

Davis admitted that while he enjoyed the benefits of both pop and country audiences in his concerts, "with a good, solid, country background, you tend to stay around longer."

He closed every show with his signature song, "I Believe in Music."

HELEN REDDY: "HEAR HER ROAR"



More than just a singer and actress. Helen Reddy, who died Sept. 29, five years after being diagnosed with dementia, was a pioneering women's rights activist of the 1970s

Her anthem, "I Am Woman," touched audiences worldwide during the women's liberation movement in the U.S.

She explained in 2014 that the words, "I am woman" came to her and just wouldn't leave. "Over and over," she recalled, the lines 'I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman.' And I thought, well, this has to be a song."

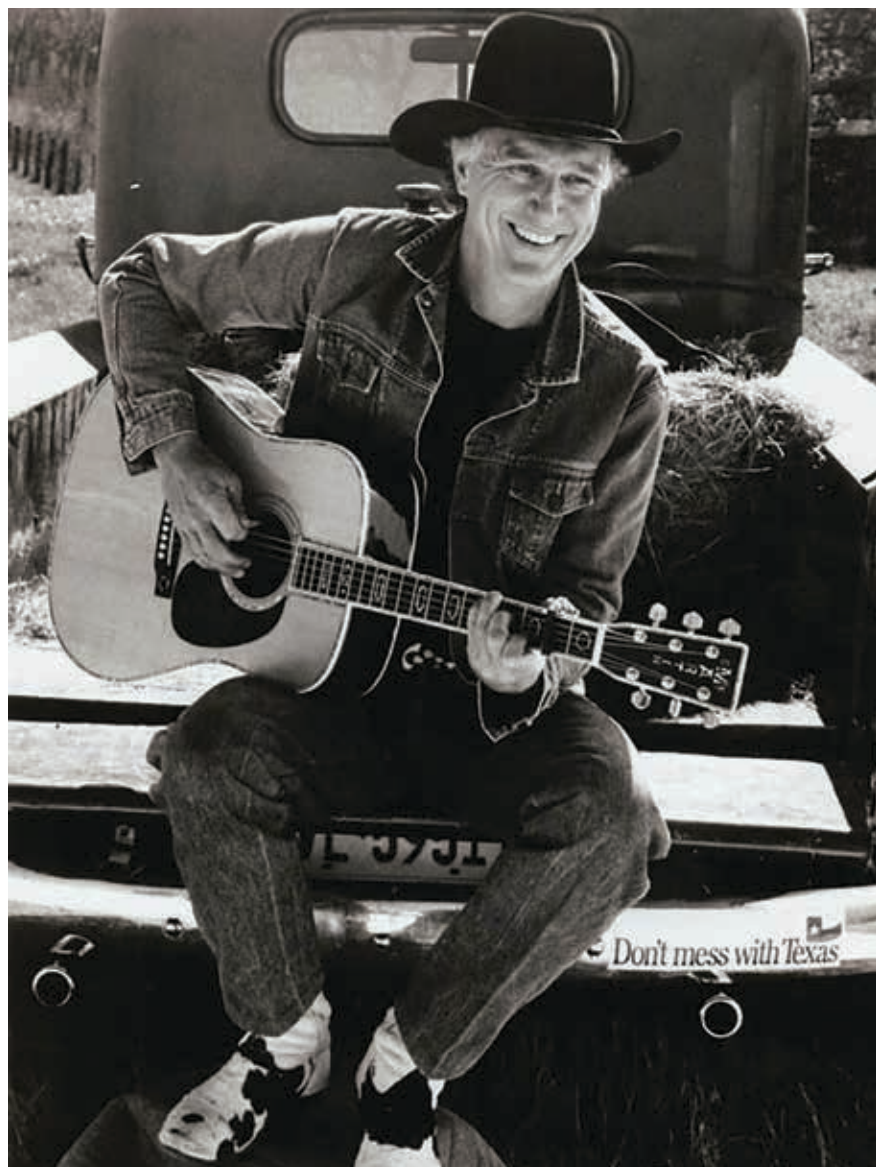
It went to number one in the country in 1972, the same year that the Equal Rights Amendment passed the Senate and when Shirley Chisholm ran for president. The Supreme Court decided *Roe v. Wade* a month after "I Am Woman" topped the charts.

Reddy earned a Grammy for it and, at the awards ceremony, she thanked God, saying: "Because She makes everything possible." She was the first Australian artist to reach No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and to win a Grammy.

When Alice Cooper called her the "Queen of housewife rock," Reddy suggested, "That means I've reached a lot of people in a simplistic manner who would never go to a lecture or read an article on women's lib."

She went on to No. 1 hits with "Delta Dawn" in 1973 and "Angie Baby" in 1974, and earned other hit songs, including "Leave Me Alone (Ruby Red Dress)," "You and Me Against the World," and "Ain't No Way to Treat a Lady." Especially popular on adult contemporary radio, Reddy was later called by the Chicago Tribune "the queen of '70s pop."

Trivia fans may recall that she made her big-screen debut in the disaster movie "Airport 1975" (released in 1974) as a guitar-playing nun who comforts a sick little girl (Linda Blair) on an almost certainly doomed 747.



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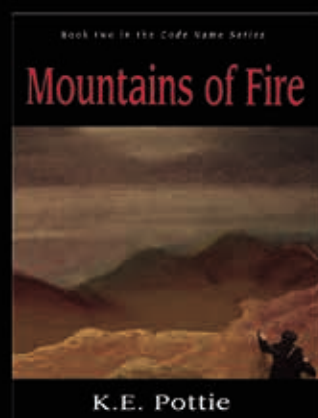
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