

Sound

Magazine



Waves

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**Volume 30
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**An
Interview
with**

Trans-Siberian Orchestra

Plus

- Sam Myers
- Miss Emily
- JD3 & the
Jondo Trio
- George Benson
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Patrick "Pat" Furey 1961 - 2020



**Patrick was one of the original
writers for Sound Waves Magazine
Rest in Peace My Friend**

**FRIENDS
DON'T LET
FRIENDS
DRINK
AND
DRIVE**

7 PM Will Never Be The Same: A Tribute to Alex Trebek

By Mark T. Gould

First, you saw the graphics. Then, you heard that iconic music. But, you knew it just wasn't really 7 p.m. until you heard the golden voice of Johnny Gilbert say:

"And now, the host of Jeopardy!, Alex Trebek!!"

Then, you knew it was really 7 p.m.

For each of his 36 years as that host, Alex Trebek insisted that that the contestants, not he, were the stars of Jeopardy!. That's why he demanded to be introduced that way.

In a world full of self-important media cults of personality, that was so refreshing.

Trebek, who passed away in November after a long battle with pancreatic cancer, was the kindly uncle professor of Jeopardy!, never so much as stepping out of his lane to take over the program, unlike so many other game show hosts.

But, for its legions of fans, Jeopardy! was so much more than just a game show, and Alex Trebek was so much more than just its host.

"What we saw of Alex is what you saw, he was a presence," said Fran Fried, a friend of mine from Connecticut who is a life-long fan of the show, as well as being a Jeopardy! contestant in 2017. "He was erudite, well-spoken, well-mannered, well-dressed – everything we saw all those years on TV."

Trebek was born in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada. He grew up in a bilingual French-English household. He graduated from the University of Ottawa, with a degree in philosophy, in 1961. While a university student, he was a member of the English Debating Society, and it was there that he developed his interest in a broadcasting career.

Before completing his degree, Trebek began working for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). He would eventually read the CBC national radio news, and cover a wide range of special events for CBC Radio and CBC Television, including curling and horse racing.

Trebek's first hosting job was on a Canadian music program called "Music Hop" in 1963. In 1966, he hosted a high school quiz show called "Reach for the Top." From 1967 to 1970 he was a host for CBC classical music programs. He also hosted a weekly skating program. Starting in spring 1969, Trebek hosted "Strategy," a weekday afternoon game show. From 1971 until the end of 1972, Trebek hosted "I'm Here Til 9," the local morning drive radio show on CBC Toronto.

In 1973, Trebek moved to the United States, and worked for NBC as the host of a new game show, "The Wizard of Odds." A year later, he hosted the popular game show "High Rollers," which had two incarnations on NBC, and an accompanying syndicated season.

After "High Rollers" was cancelled in 1980, Trebek moved on to "Battlestars" for NBC. In September 1981, he took the helm of the syndicated "Pitfall." After both series ended, Trebek hosted a revival of "Battlestars," called "The New Battlestars."

After that show ended, he shot a series of pilots for other series for legendary producer and Hollywood impresario Merv Griffin, including a revival of Griffin's game show Jeopardy!, after original host Art Fleming (a friend of Trebek's) declined to return to the role over creative differences.

The revival sold, and, in 1984, Trebek started his iconic 36-year run.

"I first became aware of him as an adolescent, in the mid-'70s, when he was hosting 'High Rollers,' Fried remembered. "I was like, 'who's this guy with the Mike Brady haircut and the mustache?'"

"At the time, he didn't impress me at all," she added. "I was an adolescent; besides, we Americans in general didn't know about him at that point, even though he'd been a fixture in Canada.

"When (the show) was rebooted for syndication in 1984, and I learned

Trebek was gonna be the host, I said, 'You mean the guy with the Mike Brady hair and mustache from 'High Rollers'? I wasn't thrilled with the choice. I didn't think he had the heft to carry the show.

"My reference was Art Fleming, who had a big, booming, benevolent, authoritarian air about him, and who was quite a cultural touchstone himself back then," Fried recalled. "I didn't think Trebek could be as good as Art. Then again, with my prognostication skills, I probably would've told you not to buy shares of Apple

in 1984, either.

"Obviously, I was dead wrong.

"What we saw of Alex (as contestants) is what you saw," she added, "except that during the (contestants) interview (on the show), he was three feet from me, which was kind of surreal.

"The only interaction you didn't see was the me-and-Trebek headshot; during the first commercial break, he'd go out and take headshots with all the contestants (the camera folks would train their lens, then take a screenshot still of us), then, he would go and talk to the audience for a few minutes, taking questions from fans."

On March 6, 2019, Trebek announced that he had been diagnosed with stage IV pancreatic cancer. He had been experiencing a persistent stomach ache before the diagnosis, but did not recognize it as a symptom of the disease.

In a prepared video announcement of the diagnosis, Trebek noted that his prognosis was poor, but said that he would aggressively fight the cancer in hope of beating the odds, and would continue hosting Jeopardy! for as long as he was able, joking that his contract obligated him to do so for three more years.

Trebek updated his situation in May of that year, stating that he was responding exceptionally well to treatment, and that some of the tumors had shrunk to half their previously-observed size. He credited the prayers and well wishes of his fans for the better-than-usual results, and said that he planned to undergo several more rounds of chemotherapy.

The news hit Fried as hard, if not more so, than Trebek's many other fans. "I had just lost my job that March afternoon last year, and I was a little numb as I got in the car," she remembered. "But then I turned on WCBS radio as I drove away, and I heard Alex's voice, talking about how he was gonna fight this.

"They were playing the video, which had just broken globally. I learned from the anchor after the message that it was stage IV pancreatic cancer, and, well, I was even more numb, trying to let it sink in," Fried said.

"(Then) I realized that, while I'd lost my job, things could easily be much worse. I knew it was gonna be tough sledding against stage IV of one of the worst forms of cancer, and the day would come sooner than later that he'd be gone. He fought for 20 months after his diagnosis, which was consider-

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MUSIC NOTES

“The Concert Is Still Coming to Town”

By Mark T. Gould

*“You better watch out
You better not cry
You better not pout
I’m telling you why....”*



ty or nice...”

I was freezing my mistletoe off, but I had to find out when we’d all be back there in the audience.

I followed the directions precisely, although it took a Christmas miracle combination of GPS, Waze, and Siri to get me there.

The puddle jumper, such as it was, dropped me off at Longyearbyen, but that still left me many miles away.

Then, I noticed the car.

Uber? Out here?

I guess he really can make miracles come true.

The car lights flashed at me. I knew that was it. I grabbed my bag, and walked over, carefully, across the frozen tundra.

I opened the door, and bent down to look in.

Immediately, I got a whiff of homemade cookies. I looked over at the driver. The white hair. The large straw bonnet. The plaid worsted coat.

It was her.

“Hello,” she said. “My husband is very busy, so he sent me to pick you up.”

I slid into the front passenger seat, and we took off.

We drove and drove and drove. Naturally, Christmas carols played on the car radio. I dozed off. It seemed like only minutes, but it was, of course, hours.

*“He’s making a list,
He’s checking it twice,
He’s gonna find out who’s naugh-*

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The sound of the car wheels scraping on pavement awakened me from my slumber.

I looked to the left. All water.

I looked to the right. All water.

I looked at my Smart Watch.

Midnight. And, the sun was still shining brightly above us. The illumination on the dashboard said it was -35 degrees out there. I was glad I had on my LL Bean parka.

We got to the end of what was clearly a long bridge. Remarkably, there was no toll. There was, however, a celebration of polar bears eyeing me closely from not far away.

Then, I saw the unmistakable sign.

“Santa’s Workshop, 10 miles,” followed by “South of the Border, 3500 miles behind you.”

“Tourists,” I thought. “Tourists.”

We traveled down a rocky, paved road, covered by permafrost and dotted by the occasional spruce tree. Overhead, I noticed many birds in the somehow brightly-lit midnight sky. I craned my neck to see them, wondering what they were.

“Snow bunting, northern fulmar, and black-legged kittiwake,” she said, speaking for the first time in our journey, apparently reading my mind.

“Oh,” I thought. “Them.”

She patted my leg.

“Not much farther,” she said.

I dozed again. The car came to an

abrupt stop, jerking me into the console.

“Darn elves,” she said. “They never clean off the road.”

Elves.

She said elves.

I know she said elves.

I knew then we’d reached the end of my journey, although the adventure was just to begin.

I glanced out of the car window.

Incredibly, the magnificent aurora borealis bathed like illuminated stage lights on an immense castle that was almost obscured by snow. Inside, some lights appeared on, which seemed promising to me.

I got out, and grabbed my bag.

Before me, an enormous front door opened, but I didn’t see anyone.

Then, I remembered.

Elves.

So, I looked down.

There she stood, dressed in red from head to toe. Even her mask was red. She had on a shirt that read “Reindeer Lives Matter.”

She waved me in.

“He’s in the back, waiting for you.”

Frazzled yet dazzled, I trudged along behind her.

We hadn’t walked far, and, there he was, just as I hoped he would be.

“He sees you when you’re sleeping
And he knows when you’re awake

He knows if you’ve been bad or good

So be good for goodness sake...”

Red coat with white fur collar and cuffs, white-fur-cuffed red trousers, red hat with white fur, black leather belt and boots, and, of course, a white fur-lined mask. Nearby was a rather large stocking, crammed with wrapped gifts.

“Ho! Ho! Ho!,” he exclaimed. “You must be the guy from Sound Waves Magazine. My agent told me you were coming. I read your magazine on line every month.

He rubbed his giant belly.

“How is my dear friend Dave Pot- tie? Does Sue Menhart still have her band? Is Greg Piccolo, God bless him, still blowing away?

“My goodness, man, is the Seaport still there?”

I struggled to answer.

“Oh, never mind,” he chuckled, motioning me to a chair. “I’m sure you came to tell me what’s on your Christmas list.”

Relieved that he didn’t ask me to sit on his lap, I plopped down in front of him.

“Just one request,” I responded. “Just one.”

He guffawed again, and continued to rub his belly. With his other hand, he pulled at his long beard, and eyed me carefully.

“Ho! Ho! Ho! Shoot.”

I took a deep breath. It had been a long, harrowing journey. I had to phrase it just right.

“It’s not really just for me, but for a lot of us,” I said.

He leaned closer to me.

“What is it, son?”

I just blurted it out.

“For Christmas, for my family, my friends and my fellow music fanatics, well, I just want concerts to come back.

“I know there are a lot more important things to ask for, but we kinda need ‘em now.”

I started to tell him about socially-distanced, drive-in shows; the “In My Room” home videos, the live steams and virtual performances, but, as I started, I noticed him look askance at me.

I stopped prattling on, and didn’t say another word.

It was silent for a few minutes.

He leaned back, and grimaced.

Clearly, it was not a time to be jolly.

He turned, look me in the eye, and spoke:

“You bring a challenge to me,” he said, never changing his expression. “We’ve been through a lot, even up here. We’re trying to figure out how to socially distance the reindeer. How to deliver all the gifts to all the homes, especially for the needy and those affected by the virus, and get back here safely.

“Let me tell you this,” he continued. “I know you have a caring concert promoter down there, Jimmy Koplik, who’s been good all year. He makes it all about the fans.

“When it gets slow here, well, I’ve even gone down and snuck into a few of his shows. This beard just

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makes me pass for an old hippie.
 "I even saw the 'Magic of Lights'.
 Well done. And, one time, a guy
 named Jimmy Riccio even bought
 me a beer."

'Santa Claus in the Oakdale VIP
 Lounge,' I thought. 'A yuletide tra-
 dition unlike any other.'

He looked away and down at the
 floor.

"Haven't seen a concert in a while,
 though. I miss them, too."

"You better watch out!

You better not cry

*You better not pout, I'm telling
 you why"*

I looked down at the floor, too, not
 wanting him to see the tears in my
 eyes.

But, he knew.

I know he knew.

"I'll make you a deal," he said.

I looked up into his old, caring
 eyes.

"Tell everyone you know. Even
 those you don't know. Wear your
 mask. Socially distance. Keep the

faith. Be good to one another. Care
 about your family, your friends, and
 your neighbors.

"If you can do that, I promise there
 will be concert tickets for everyone
 soon."

I told him he had a deal, and bid all
 a good night.

I know I'm not going to let him
 down.

I think, maybe, you shouldn't ei-
 ther.

After all, he is Santa Claus, and it's
 Christmas time.



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All The World's a Stage

"Finding The Music"

By Sue Menhart

When the bars and the schools and the live music venues and the world shut down in March 2020 so did the music, so it seemed. Rather than put my quarantine time to good use by writing some introspective songs on my guitar, I left it there, lying on my band practice basement floor in its case, gathering dust. I felt no joy in music. It was all too sad for me.

The silence was deafening at first. I live a half a mile from I-95 and there was...nothing. The quiet was eerie and scary. I resisted but I gradually found music elsewhere.

I found it in the carillon at the top of the Union Baptist Church on High Street in Mystic, Connecticut. On every hour the bells play Westminster Quarters and a tone for each hour, except for 12 p.m. and 6 p.m. when an entire song is played for 15 minutes. I pulled my car over to listen, amazed at the rarity yet familiarity of hearing music of any kind. The church has stood since 1765 and a standard church bell had rung consistently at 10:15 a.m. to warn townsfolk that it was time to get ready for church. When the hurricane of 1938 destroyed the steeple and town clock a year later they were replaced by a carillon and a new clock. I spoke with lifetime deacon Bill Adams who told me he computerized the carillon in the year 2000 complete with a collection of 500 songs. He and staff members choose the songs for the week depending on the season and the holiday, mostly hymns and during December, Christmas songs. There it was: Music in its simplest yet modern form.

When Andrea Bocelli sang on Easter Sunday at Milan's Duomo cathedral, while drone cameras floated above empty cities around



the world, it was the first time I had seen live music since the start of it. I couldn't help the tears running down my face as my ham warmed in the oven while my daughter, home for an extended spring break from college, a break that would last six months, looked forward to an Easter egg hunt in the yard. Just she and my husband would be doing the hunting. Hope sprang, for a short while.

I would sit on my back porch leaning my ears toward the highway longing for anything, anything at all. Now and then I could hear a whirr or two from a big rig but motorcyclists, always living life undauntedly, added music too: Harleys a low hum, Kawasakis a fifth interval higher.

As summer approached I found music more prevalently, because I so desperately needed to hear it. There was a lone cricket in the garage, some dew drops through the leaves, a family of doves which had tripled in their numbers, the squeal of a red-tailed hawk, seagulls I could hear from Long Island Sound a couple miles to the east. On foggy days that same ocean graced me with the perfectly timed foghorn from Stonington Point. There was a trickle from my backyard stream. I could certainly find the music when I cranked up a Netflix movie with a great soundtrack with the whish whish whishing of the air conditioners competing while a UPS truck's

backup alarm pulling into the drive grabbed my attention.

I took to the outdoors more and there it was again: The splash splash of kayak oars, the gulping of a bull frog, the twerp of a toad, the crackle of a backyard fire, steaks sizzling on the grill, a bug snapper, the kazoo of a quail, and keeping the beat, a woodpecker. I noted that the pounding of the surf at Misquamicut Beach in Westerly, Rhode Island is different than the lapping softness at Eastern Point Beach in Groton, Connecticut and that sand running through your toes makes a sound if you listen.

I soon found joy in the sound of cracking an acorn with my walking sneakers, crunching fallen leaves, kicking loose branches out of the way. I found the rhythm with my chop chop chopping of autumn vegetables while prepping a five-hour stew and with the sprinkling of parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme on my Thanksgiving turkey. There was even a remote joy hearing the harmonies of a coyote pack and a lone gray wolf on a moonlit night, followed by an alerting hiss from a doe to her young.

Soon there will be jingle bells, wrapping paper, scissors and tape to drown the silence. There will be clinking of champagne glasses. There will be hymns. Maybe I'll strum my guitar. With winter upon us and the barer the trees, the more our voices carry. Oh listen – there's "Joy to the World!"



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=



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LOCAL BEAT

"HOLIDAYS BRING COMMERCIAL CHRISTMAS POP MUSIC BY WHITE CLASSIC ROCK STARS"

By Andrew Kerbs

I often wondered whether I was the only teenager to like classical and jazz Christmas music more than the hard rock my peers preferred in the 1980s and 90s. I remember racing down Broad St. in Red Bank to the local New Age store to buy tapes by Mike Hedges and George Winston while my friends lined up at Jack's to buy GNR's "Use Your Illusion" and Metallica's "Black Album." I thought I was cool listening to new-wave and classical music, even if my parents listened to that kind of music. Considering how cutting edge and futuristic sounding Mannheim Steamroller's synthesized carols sounded in the 80s, how ironic that that same trailblazing orchestra seems so quaint and traditional today on PBS. And unlike PBS, that holiday traditionalism has become increasingly commercialized by singers that copy the songs and styles of previous artists music.

Christmas has seemed to becoming too commercialized and happening too early. If only people (and restaurants) would take their Christmas lights down after winter ends (and stop putting blue and white ones up in the summer). Yet if it can snow on Halloween and rednecks and hipsters alike can keep Christmas lights up all year round, I suppose Bing Crosby can sing Christmas carols starting in early November. And listeners can enjoy Xmas songs by classic rock artists too, regardless of how often they appropriate previous artists' music.

White rock stars are great at covering black singers' songs or taking

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ing their influences but the original (black) artists deserve even more musical credit for both the blues and Christmas music they pioneered. People forget that it was not Bill Haley, but Big Joe Turner who wrote "Shake Rattle and Roll." Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" riff was stolen from Willie Dixon who sued them in court. Chuck Berry did the same thing to the "Beach Boys" for "Fun Fun Fun" (whose riff echoed that of Johnny Be Good). Punk bands like the Clash, Blondie, Police and Men at Work pitched reggae to a white audience and Bo Diddley complained that he "never saw his paycheck go up" after rock stars took his influence to stadiums around the world. Many of the aforementioned black artists would have liked to have seen some royalties and recognition of their own.

Clapton not only appropriated black music but made racist remarks during a drunken concert in 1976, one of a couple of low points in his career critically and commercially. However, I wonder if Clapton fans recognize that the Youtube fodder that circulates about that incident consists of a 21st century American (posing as Clapton) dubbing a racist rant over the sound of a crowd that must have been pre-recorded because they aren't even reacting to the tirade. I'm against the Clapton appropriating black blues only to turn around and insult non-white

foreigners of whom he draws his influences. But getting the truth out there is no excuse for crappy inaccurate journalism.

Bruce Springsteen never suffered the embarrassment or indecency of making xenophobic remarks on stage like Clapton. If anything, his support for immigrant workers during his conscientious but boring and arrogant Tom Joad tour speaks liberal views on people of color. However, he did appropriate a Jackson 5 version of a Xmas song "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" whose catchy rock and roll chorus was already been arranged by that band 10 years prior to his own cover of that version.

Fortunately, classic rock artists have redeemed themselves in recent years as Clapton's concerts with BB King paid better tribute to that man's musical influence than U2 (whose music was never rooted in blues to begin with). Clapton and Journey's Steve Perry have also, like Springsteen, put out some impressive renditions of Christmas songs in recent years.

Within the past year, Steve Perry has recorded "Silver Bells" while Clapton has recorded a Christmas Album titled Happy Xmas. Clapton's vocal delivery is soulful on his performance of "White Christmas" and he alternates the time and pitch of the carol's lyrics without straying too far outside the song. His classic acoustic blues riffs echo the "Unplugged Album" of 1992 and the recording was accompanied by a lush string section produced on a reel-to-reel tape by a fluffy haired Santa with hair too white to be real. His vocals on the carol "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" take on an almost whispering quality similar to his singing on Behind the Sun and Pilgrim from years past and the electric solos he noodles between verses are clean and sharp. He also plays a beefy slide guitar and high-mixed drums on "Silent Night."

Steve Perry of Journey fame might not be as impressive a musician as Clapton but he's an even better singer with a vocal range that shows little signs of limitation as old age approaches. His Christmas singles

feature drums and piano accompaniment and Perry's unmistakable tenor. The single "Silver Bells" features cool key changes and the soul is still there but the meter shifts unpredictably and doesn't stay within the song nor stick coherently to the rest of the chorus. However, his voice carries the day, with full throated "I" and "y" phonemes on "Christmas Tiiiiime in the Cityyy. . ." sounding like "Taaaayyme in the Citaaaaay." Close your eyes while listening and you'd think he was singing late 70s favorite "Lights" off old Journey album Infinity. While the R&B influences are definitely there, rarely has he appropriated the music, ending the Christmas hit with a high falsetto scream at the end. He's no Sam Cooke, but he's still got it!





BAND DATES

BIG LUX

20 - Phoenix, Stonington, CT 6 pm

BOSSE BRIGGS DUO

19 - Woods Tavern, W. Greenwich, RI
7-10

NICK BOSSE

& THE NORTHERN ROOTS

4 - Phoenix, Pawcatuck, CT 7-9:30pm

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Trans-Siberian Orchestra



By Rex Rutkoski

The Grinch that stole Christmas for the band so closely associated with it, Trans-Siberian Orchestra, was Covid-19.

While that virus has kept TSO, like so many other groups, off-the-road this year for the first time in 21 years, it won't prevent their energetic, story-based, progressive rock holiday-themed music coming into the homes of ardent fans of all ages.

The critically-acclaimed group will present the world premiere of its first-ever livestream event, an all-new staging of its beloved album "Christmas Eve and Other Stories Live In Concert," on Fri., Dec. 18. For fans unable to view it at 8 p.m. Dec. 18, TSO is making the performance available for streaming on demand through midnight on Sunday, Dec. 20.

In one sense, it will keep a favorite holiday tradition in-tact. In addition to the full album concert, fans will view special pre-show content including behind-the-scenes footage and classic interview segments.

(Advance tickets are offered as a family-friendly \$30 all-in ticket. Fans have the option to purchase gift packages, including T-shirts, ornaments, and masks, plus livestream tickets can be sent digitally to friends and family as presents. For more details and to purchase tickets and packages, visit www.trans-siberian.com).

In announcing the event, TSO's music director and lead guitarist Al Pitrelli said, "So many things have changed in 2020. Masks, social distancing, home schooling, and of course live entertainment. What will not change

is all of us being able to celebrate the holidays together. It will just be in a different way. For 21 years we've had the privilege of bringing our tours, including 'Christmas Eve and Other Stories,' to hundreds of cities and millions of people. This year we will bring this timeless story to your living rooms. We will miss seeing all of you in person, but like Paul O'Neill, the late founder, composer and lyricist, always said, 'Adapt, overcome, and improvise.' That's exactly what we are going to do. This will be an opportunity to see your favorite holiday story up close and personal. We can't wait to share this with all of you."

O'Neill saw "Christmas Eve and Other Stories" as "Rock Theater."

"STRANGERS HELPING STRANGERS"

The story is set on Christmas Eve when a young angel is sent to Earth to bring back what is best representative of humanity. Following favorite TSO themes of "strangers helping strangers" and "the kindness of others," "Christmas Eve and Other Stories" takes listeners around the world to help reunite a young girl with her distraught father.

The rock opera also features such TSO classics as "Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24," "O' Come All Ye Faithful," "Good King Joy," "Promises To Keep," "This Christmas Day," "Ornament," and the epic "Old City Bar."

This special event will bring together members of both the East and West bands for the first time since 2000 when TSO first began touring with two

full groups. For the livestream, Bryan Hicks will narrate and Al Pitrelli (guitar) and Derek Wieland (keyboards) will serve as musical directors. The band will feature Chris Caffery (guitar), Mee Eun Kim (keyboards), Johnny Lee Middleton (bass), Asha Mevlana (violin), and Jeff Plate (drums). Vocalists will be Russell Allen, Nate Amor, John Brink, Erika Jerry, Chloe Lowery, Georgia Napolitano and Jeff Scott Soto.

Chris Caffery tells Sound Waves, “As soon as we saw that this virus was happening we knew that if it got out of control there was a possibility we wouldn’t be touring. We kept praying and hoping as long as humanly possible that we could do it, but by the time we reached the middle of August we were pretty sure there was no way possible for us to tour.”

He says there was a big difference between thinking they might not tour and the day when he received the phone call that it was definitely canceled.

“That reality really hit me like a brick. Once I realized, ‘Wow, after 21 years of TSO tours, this year I was going to be home at Christmas and not able to see the fans and my family in the band,’ “ he adds.

THEY’LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

On a positive note, band members will be able to be home for Christmas for the first time in many years.

“It’s definitely different. I’m excited to be able to decorate a lot of the things outside of my house. When I’m on the road I decorate my tour bus, my hotel rooms and a lot of the areas that I see indoors, but I never get to put lights on trees and on the outside of my house and barns,” Caffery says. “So, for me I’m looking forward to kind of turning my yard into a little winter wonderland. Plus, it’ll be nice to wake up Christmas morning in your bed and know that you get to stay home that day and spend it with your family.”

As to what he would tell someone who has never experienced his band about why TSO has become such an important tradition for people at the holidays, he reminds that TSO was something that Paul O’Neill created to bring people and musicians together.

“The lyrics and stories have a lot of hope. We try to spread that message of hope to all the people in the audience and all the people that listen to us around the world. Basically, simple little acts that we can do to change people’s lives, and that exists in our music and our live show, that connection is something that’s really become a part of the fans’ lives every year,” he explains “So, we thought it was really important to do this livestream. We hope this energy and feeling can go to the people who have never seen us before.”

INTENSE LOYALTY

Does this intense loyalty serve as continual motivation to stay at the top of their game?

Caffery: “As far as staying on top of our game, every year we tried to make sure that the show is better as we try to bring it to a different level. That includes the production but it also includes ourselves as musicians and singers and performers.”

He does not believe that having a blend of the East and West Coast bands will change the dynamics or feel of the livestream performance.

“We all rehearse together as both bands every year, so we work together and we establish the setlist and the performance aspects in a lot of different things that happen musically as a whole,” he explains. “Al being the musical director for the West Coast and Derek being the musical director for the East Coast, they both work together on what it is we’re going to do for the tours every year. So, their working together on this it’s just going to be pretty much a big conglomeration of everything we do. Plus, we did do the ‘Beethoven’s Last Night’ tours and we did the Waken Festival with the two bands so we know how it feels to be working together. A lot of these musi-

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cians I’ve played in bands with for over 30 years.”

Since its touring debut, TSO has played approximately 2,100 concert dates for more than 17 million fans and has sold in excess of 12 million albums and DVDs.

DEFINITELY DIFFERENT

He doesn’t necessarily anticipate that this performance will be more challenging than traditional TSO concerts because there will be no audience reaction.

“I’m not sure it’s going to be challenging. I’m not sure if that’s the correct word, but I think it’s going to be definitely different. The main difference is we won’t see those faces and smiles and things that we react back to on-stage. A lot of times when we are smiling, as we do in the photos you see, that is a reaction to somebody directly we see in the crowd or the crowd itself. That is something we feed off of and that’s the one thing we won’t be seeing, so I guess if you cast your mind back into your memory you could think about a lot of those situations and try to connect the two together in this situation.”

Caffery says he has done a lot of live television in the past, so he knows what it feels like to be in front of a camera. “And you do think about the people that are watching you at home, so it is pretty natural for me to perform in this particular element,” he adds.

Continues Page 13



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He is asked if, when life gets back to a new normal, he thinks the music industry will be significantly changed and, if so, in what ways? And does he believe any of those changes, or new approaches to making and delivering music that are being learned during the Covid era can/will be positive ones?

"Well, I really think we need to see exactly what happens. We may get back to normal and we may not until we know for sure exactly where this is going," he replies. "It's really hard to say. If things do get back to normal, I'm pretty sure we will definitely be washing our hands more and being more conscious of what may happen if we do get sick. I think the flu season may be healthier than it was in the past just because we know how to act differently in the situation now because of how serious this was. So, I think health-wise, yes, it's very possible that we will see positives."

CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

As for the industry, he adds, "I really have to see exactly where it goes to know exactly what will change. Hopefully it's not too many changes and whatever ones do happen will be changes for the better."

In the years ahead, does he think special livestream events, like TSO's, will become a regular part of making live music available to people, perhaps in tandem with, rather than in place of, traditional concert tours? Will TSO be open to this?

Caffery: "Well, like anything, I guess with the door being open anything could be possible. I think it really is a matter of just how much things have changed when we get back to our lives in a normal form. Nothing will ever be the same as performing live in front of the fans, but this is a way for us to get things across the world to places that we haven't had a chance to, or ones that during the winter season we can't get to because we're touring in America."

The discussion turns to the ability of the power of music to give us strength,

to give us hope. He is asked his thoughts on the role music has played in our lives during this ongoing Covid period and how it has perhaps eased this journey for all of us.

"Well, I know for me I would listen to a lot of my favorite songs sometimes just sitting out in my yard looking at the sun in the sky and thinking about life because that's really something I think many of us did during this," he says, "not necessarily in the same way as me, but just really reflecting on your life."

This is a situation Caffery says that we read about in history books but never really saw in our generations.

"It was just amazing to have it come to as a reality and a scary reality. I live in New York so we got hit like a brick right out of the gate with this so we were very aware of every detail of this immediately," Caffery says. "So, I know musicians from all over the world gathered online and the fans gathered with us and we played and sang and talked and tried to communicate as well as we could and I think that the musicians really helped ease a lot of stress, not just for the fans but for ourselves. I can't imagine how much more difficult this would've been if we didn't have the ability to communicate online visually and audibly."

(The debut studio album of "Christmas Eve and Other Stories" is available as a part of "The Christmas Trilogy," a three-album collection that also includes definitive TSO albums "The Christmas Attic" and "The Lost Christmas Eve." "The Trilogy," which has been out of print for several years, became available on November 20, and is ready for pre-order now at www.trans-siberian.com).

(Rex Rutkoski is a veteran regional, national and international freelance writer based in the Pittsburgh suburbs of Freeport, Pa. He can be reached at rexrutkoski@gmail.com)



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HEARING AID



SAM MYERS & The South Dallas Shoan-Nufferz

"My Pal Sam"

Jack Daddy Record

Dear Readers it gives me great pleasure to review the musical efforts of a fellow Sound Waves Magazine supporter and contributing writer Jack Chaplin who produced the latest Sam Myers CD on his recording label, Jack Daddy Records. Jack is also owner of Daddy Jacks Restaurant in New London and has a monthly column in Sound Waves Magazine titled "Cooking With The Blues".

For his first endeavor as a record label producer he chose to highlight his friend and legendary blues artist Sam Myers with his CD project entitled "My Pal Sam".

Sam Myers born in 1936 was from Jackson Mississippi where his Trumpet and drumming skills got him into the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago.

There he met and was sitting in with Jimmy Rogers, Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf, Little Walter, Hound Dog Taylor, and Elmore James. Myers played drums with Elmore James on a fairly steady basis from 1952 until James's death, in 1963, and is credited on many of James's historic recordings for Chess Records. For those of you who are not familiar, Chess Records is easily on par with MoTown Records as one of the forefathers of the rhythm and blues genre, by expanding its awareness and popularity throughout the world.

Sadly Sam Myers passed in 2006 but

that didn't stop Jack Chaplin in creating a recording label and gathering various Sam Myers recordings to form his CD "My Pal Sam". Produced at Butchie Boy Studios in Dallas, Texas the band consists of Lucky Peterson, Brett Nance, Big Will, and Butch Bonner. Coincidentally Lucky Peterson is another blues superstar who at the time of this review is also no longer with us. He is best known for guitar, vocals, and keyboard. This child prodigy was discovered by legendary blues producer Willie Dixon at age 5 and in his later years was playing backup guitar and keyboards for Etta James, Bobby "Blue" Bland, and Little Milton. Peterson died at the ripe Young age of 55 this past May, 2020 making this collection of blues tunes more rare than most people realize...

Now lets get to the music! The CD starts with an all time blues classic "Bring It On Home To Me" with great vocals and Peterson playing the organ. Track 2 "Left Me With A Broken Heart" is a comfortable bluesy bump & grind featuring Sam's vocals along with great harp and piano playing. If your imagination is like mine this song is not for the faint of heart. Track 3 "Newport News" is another slow bluesy tune but this time with a little more grit and with great guitar and piano licks. Track 4 "Going Down Slow" is a standard 12 bar blues enhanced by a spotlight on some great harp leads. Jumping to track 7 "Nerve To Put Me Out" and track 8 "These Young Girls" you will find lively blues at its best with a great band of seasoned blues musicians backing Sam's vocals. You can't help but smile ear to ear and dancing in your seat. On track 9 "Sleeping In The Ground" Lucky Peterson's bluesy organ playing and vocals take center stage as you imagine the audience swaying back & forth to what old school blues music is suppose to sound like. My overall impression of Sam Myers "My Pal Sam" is pure blues gold. It's an organic rendition, what you hear is what you get, and best served with a cigar and a healthy glass of fine Kentucky Bourbon. Like I said Old school blues played by old school greats. But Wait, there's a BONUS – on the inside cover of the CD jacket Jack Chaplin tells how he met, became friendly with Sam Myers, and

how the CD; "My Pal Sam" came to be. That great story alone is worth the \$13.00 price of admission. Speaking of which, the "My Pal Sam" CD is available at: https://www.daddyjacksnewlondon.com/45542080665/checkouts/044e980419268d7dc062d4761391cdd9?locale=en&skip_shopify_pay=true.

I think you know by now you're getting a Very Strong Buy recommendation from me. Note: Sound Waves set up an email link for me. Just click on my name and feel free to write any comments or suggestions you may have.

Until Next Time

– Adrian Webb



JD3 & the Jondo Trio

"Something Good"

Nate Mosely discovered the blues at a young age and unusual way, playing an ELO 45 at 33 speed: the miscue revealed a blues underlayer and low ranging voice that Mosely immediately connected to. From this unlikely origin story, a passionate devotion to the blues brought the singer/guitarist through an unsatisfactory run with various cover bands to a collaboration with drummer Paul Osborn, who shared in a desire to produce original music. That this would be driven by the blues was unspoken, yet understood. With the addition of Stu Way on bass, a classic power trio was born.

In 2016, though, Mosely had a battle with cancer requiring reconstruction of his jaw: during this time, keyboardist and horn player Chris Daffron joined to fill out the band's sound while Mosely regained his full voice. Out of this has come a new album, *Something Good*, taking the now foursome band to new heights in blues performance which only age and hard times can forge. The album is an answer for those who like "swamp stomp, southern rock,

the blues, fried food, and Jesus."

On the opening track, *Restless Soul*, the band's full throttle sound rides a Texas blues, guitar chord riff, Mosely's full-throated vocals announcing that this is a southern-style free ranging band. Big Daddy ramps up the bass on a hard riding rock number, while Tangentially shows a lighter side of the band, soulfully reminiscent of a 70's sound. Texas is raw, tight, with guitar solos that embellish without overpowering, as Mosely sings "You can't punch a Sheriff's son" and "I can't go back to Texas."

Throughout this album, the band plays tight and intentional backing rhythms and melodies, while Mosely's voice rings out with truth and grit, his guitar adding to the effect with measured yet impassioned solos. The band slips into a straight-up blues number on *Try Try Try*, a fine song which showcases the underlying devotion to the blues which has drawn these musicians to their art. More info may be found at www.jd3band.com, or facebook.com/jd3official.

– Jon Persson



Miss Emily

"Live At The Isabel"

Miss Emily has been performing live since she was twelve years old, from the start calling for inspiration from the music of Aretha Franklin and Ray Charles to inform her style, and more importantly, her spirit and unfettered passion. It is important to comprehend that the songs on this album were recorded live, over a period of two-and-a-half years, without the apparent intention of turning them into an album; what has been captured is the voice of one of today's compelling artists, riding purely on the strength of talent Miss Emily has so fervently nurtured. She has been duly honored in her Canadian homeland, and in her tours across that nation,

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America, and Europe.

On the opening track, Miss Emily is backed by piano, guitars, a full band, over which her voice soars with the lines "I traded love for one moment with you, Sometimes It's Better To Lose." Many of the songs are written or co-written by Emily, and many are sung over the blues-infused music of her longtime band members. But it is on the slow numbers, the songs sung with only piano or guitar, where one gets to hear the fullest extent of Miss Emily's vocal talents: the range, the power, the bare yet masterfully contained emotion. Three Words is such a song, Emily and piano, soulful and poignant, never saying the three words, never needing to.

Another such track brings the conclusive line, "Blue Is Still Blue, no matter the shade." An acoustic guitar backed piece titled Dear CBC implores "I been gigging twenty years, Yea got a real legit career," asking the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to, remarkably, notice her at last and air some of her songs. At times only Emily's voice is heard, standing alone, clear and strong. A cover of The Letter is an impassioned femme response to Joe Cocker's version: It Must Have Been Love is delivered with a blues flavoring.

Miss Emily is a talent not easily given justice with mere words; her album Live At The Isabel is well worth a listen, especially for fans of female singers who put their all into the music that is their calling and passion. More info may be found at www.themissemily.com, or www.facebook.com/themissemilymusic.

- Jon Persson



GEORGE BENSON

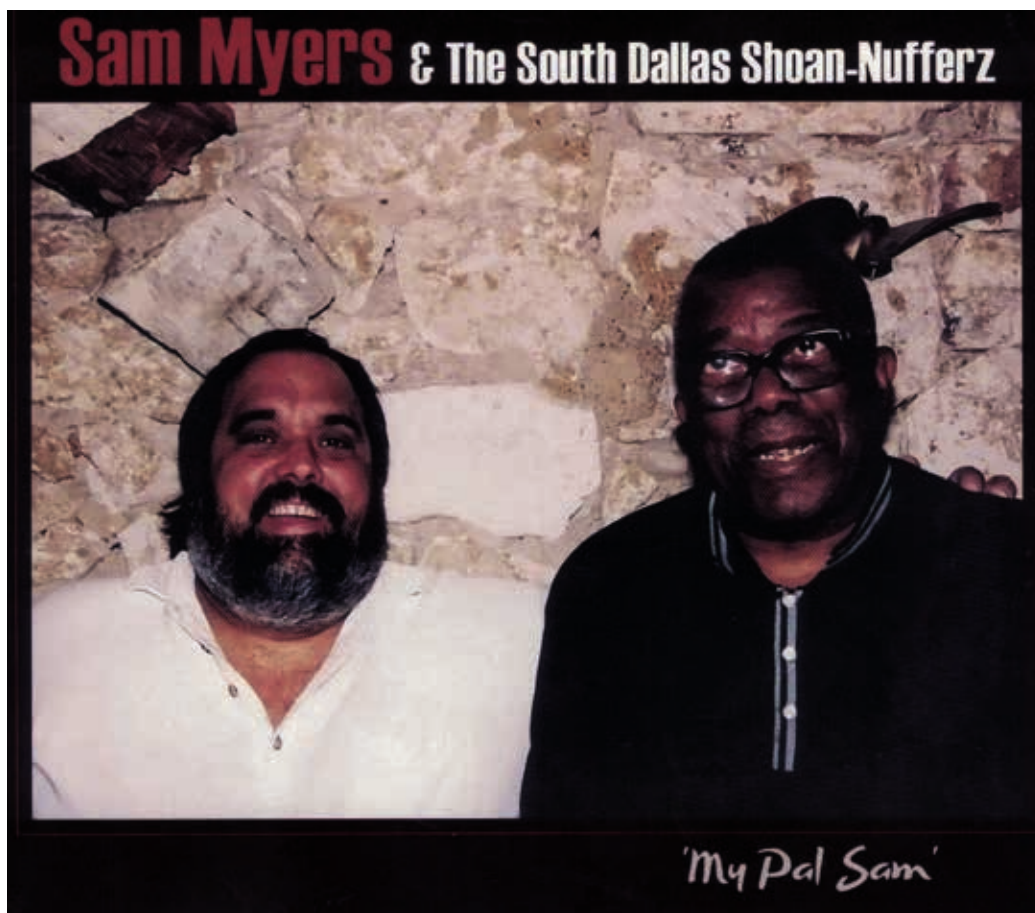
"Weekend In London"

Provogue Records

As I write this review I am burning the midnight oil while listening to this truly great compilation of Benson hits

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but I need to preface by saying I have a frustrating relationship with George Benson. Unfortunately a jazz artist, no matter how successful does not get rich playing their art by any means. Therefore many serious jazz musicians fall down the commercial pop/smooth jazz rabbit hole and my buddy George is no different. Benson got his first taste of money and fame when he finally broke it big in 1976 with his first Warner release, *Breezin'*. That's when he met Al Jarreau who was also on the Warner Bros label. Remember Al? I'm probably dating myself but I admit to being a fan back in the 80's. Al Jarreau with his amazing voice was one of the super stars of syrupy romantic commercial pop / smooth jazz era. With Benson seeing Al Jarreau's success it was an easy decision for George to follow the Al Jarreau play book and focus on commercial pop music. As a matter of fact they became fast friends and collaborated on several projects together such as the very successful album *"Givin It Up"* in 2006. Moving fast forward to today let's talk about George's latest work *"Weekend In London"*. For those listening to Benson for the first time you will immediately pickup his unmistakable style of vocal jazz, scat singing and following every vocal note and improvising on jazz guitar.

My regular readers already know I am a reviewer with the heart of a music producer and as such I look at every aspect of an album that most reviewers overlook. So before getting to the main course let's start off with drinks and appetizers. Firstly kudos to the sound engineering crew. The sound quality of Benson's latest project *"Weekend In London"* is flawless with a balance of crisp highs and rich lows and keep in mind this album was recorded live at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in London. No second takes, no pitch correction, no sound studio skulduggery, just a real and authentic performance. As for performance, Benson chose the best of the best in the world of studio musicians and taking them on the road. With the likes of Randy Waldman on Piano who worked with numerous artists over the course of his career including Barbra Streisand, Michael Jackson, and Paul McCartney to name a few. Stanley Banks on Bass who has played with Van Morrison, and Paula Atherton - Thom Hall, Keyboard - Michael O'Neill, Guitar & Vocals - and Khari Parker, Drums. As a guitarist and drummer myself I am especially impressed with Parker's talent. He's played with

Destiny's Child but mostly plays as the regular percussionist in Benson's band.

OK, let's get into the music. I will be the first to admit that there is a definite place for what I call syrupy romantic smooth jazz especially now that wintry snuggle weather is in front of the fire is around the corner. If you have the likes of Lou Rawls, Al Jarreau, Barry White and George Benson among others on your play list you can't go wrong. However with Benson there's the added bonus of having a great jazz guitarist throw in his guitar licks at just the right moments, and great vocals, and his ability to inject jazz arrangements to give new life to old standards. His many faceted talents shines through in this album.

Track 3 *"Love X Love"*, and track 13 *"Affirmation"* especially shows Benson's talent as a jazz guitarist. In track 9 *"The Ghetto"* Benson combines jazz with a latin flair and makes it work as if they belong together, and in track 12 *"Never Give Up On A Good Thing"* there is a strong horn arrangement that sounds great but I think the horns were synthesized as played by Thom Hall on keyboard.

In track 5 Benson breathes new life into an old favorite *"I Hear You Knocking"* by doing a make-over with a jazz arrangement. All in all a very enjoyable album.

I would say the tracks on this album are great each in their own rite and to those who are new to the music of George Benson this album is essential because it covers most of his hits and Benson's unmistakable style. However, those of you who are very familiar with Benson music you may be a little disappointed as I was that there is not much in the way of new music. Even with his other jazzier hits he is known for, I would have liked to see more of a spot light on Benson's jazz guitar renditions such as *"On Broadway"*, and *"Breezin"*. Oh well, can't have everything. If you are a George Benson fan, or want to explore the smooth jazz genre this album is a definite must buy. *"Weekend In London"* can be found at amazon.com. Note: Sound Waves set up an email link for me. Just click on my name and feel free to write any comments or suggestions you may have.

**Until Next Time
- Adrian Webb**



Synergy *"Making Angels"*

The Connecticut based band Synergy has produced a self-described concept album, titled *Making Angels*, over an extended period of short sessions, fulfilling an idea to tell a story of life, war, falling, redemption, and finality. It's premise begins with a man bound for Viet Nam, the term *Making Angels* a reference to killing people. The protagonist carries all the complexities, desires, fears and aversions of a young man, which create reverberations among those he makes contact with in the course of his life. This is a monumental, operatic-level undertaking for the band, recorded in a friend's basement studio in the small town of Killingly, CT. No mention is noted of plans to move the album to a stage production, though such is the path of many such themed albums.

The album opens with an instrumental *Overture*, guitar-based rock that provides background to the voice of President Lyndon Baines Johnson, announcing an almost immediate increase in the number of soldiers in Viet Nam, more than doubling this nation's presence. The past President's words add context to his own act, describing war as "young men dying in the prime" of their life, and "killing a man you don't even know well enough to hate."

Musically, the album runs deep with power rock, even heavy metal, melding into softer pieces as appropriate. The story includes the anger of abandonment, dark angst and family stories, regrets and, inevitably, conclusions. The son left behind grows to resent the constant, singular reminder that he has his Father's Eyes. The soldier realizes "All The King's Horses and all the king's men made it perfectly clear they don't want to pick me up again."

Synergy has taken a bold and intriguing path with this album, making state-

ments and telling a story, set to music which expresses with clarity the emotion of each character in this rocking, operatic opus. More info may be found at www.synergymakingangels.com.

- Jon Persson



LUKE COMBS

"What You See Is What You Get"

River House Artists / Sony Music Entertainment

Luke Combs is a country music singer/songwriter from Asheville, North Carolina that at only age 30 has reached the pinnacle of country music success. He is signed with Columbia Nashville, the country music branch of established powerhouse Sony Music Entertainment. Combs has a multitude of awards from every facet of the music industry such as Billboard, iHeart Radio, CMA, and ACM Awards to name a few. Is he a one hit wonder??, Not this artists, he wrote and performed nine songs that reached number one on several of the country charts. To top it all off he has two Platinum albums under his belt and he is only getting started...

When you reach this level of success everyone wants to work with you and the recording labels give you whatever you want. On this album Combs does duets with super stars Brooks & Dunn, and Eric Church. Speaking of getting whatever you want Combs requested to work with only the who's who of country studio musicians and the quality shows. The list is long but definitely worth mentioning.

Drums, Percussion - Jerry Roe and Doug Frasure. Bass - Jimmie Lee Sloas, Ben Jordan, and Tim Marks. Electric Guitar, Slide Guitar - Sol Philcox-Littlefield. Acoustic Guitar, Banjo, Mandolin - Carl Miner. Electric Guitar, Acoustic Guitar, Banjo - Jon Conley. Acoustic Guitar, Mandolin - Ilya Toshinsky. Pedal Steel, Lap Steel - **www.Swaves.com**

Gary Morse. Piano, Organ, Synth - Wil Houchens and Dave Cohen

Saxophone - Buddy Leach. Fiddle - Aubrey Haynie. Harmonies, Electric Guitar, Acoustic Guitar, Banjo, Synth, Percussion, Glockenspiel, Claps, Programming - Scott Moffatt. Vocals - Luke Combs. Featured Vocals on "1, 2 Many" - Brooks & Dunn. Featured Vocals on "Does To Me" - Eric Church

As for the sound quality? Better than really good. It's amazing. The album was mastered by Andrew Mendelson at Georgetown Masters, Nashville, TN and Ted Jensen at Sterling Sound, Nashville, TN. If 3D can be used as an adjective describing sound quality I would use it in this instance. Even playing this great album through my computer speakers there were times you think that Luke Combs is in the room performing just for you.

If you weren't fortunate enough to listen to Luke Combs sing before, the best way to describe his voice is a blend of raspy and melodic honey, very pleasing to the ear.

Can I be honest? If I were to review every one of his 23 tracks on this double album my review would be very redundant. What I will say it's a great feel-good album with excellent country music played by very talented musicians, the song placement that keeps you wanting more, and most of all the amazing vocals of Luke Combs. In a nutshell I absolutely loved every single track. Before I go I want to give special thanks to my friends at Sony Entertainment and Sacks for sending me Luke Combs latest album for review. It's very-very rare that I truly enjoy every single track of an album, much less a double album like this one. Luke Combs, "What You See Is What You Get" available everywhere.

Note: Sound Waves set up an email link for me. Just click on my name and feel free to write any comments or suggestions you may have.

Until Next Time
- Adrian Webb



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Alex Trebek Continued

ably longer than many other people hit with this cancer," said Fried, whose own father succumbed to the disease four years ago.

Indeed, Trebek finished that round of chemotherapy treatments in time to resume taping of the show in August 2019. Follow-up immunotherapy was ineffective, and he resumed chemotherapy in September of that year.

In March 2020, Trebek announced he had survived one year of cancer treatment (noting that his prognosis had given him only an 18% chance to survive that long) and that, though the chemotherapy treatments were often worse than the cancer symptoms themselves,

he was confident that he would survive another year, saying that ending treatment would be a "betrayal" to his family, supporters, and to the God in whom he had faith.

In October, Trebek underwent surgery related to his cancer treatment. He returned to the show two weeks after the surgery, but was unable to handle his full workload because of pain from the surgery, and had to split his usual, single-day, five-episode taping session over two days.

"I'm glad he chose to stay on the show," Fried said. "I mean, it was his life, his lifeblood, and he wanted to continue to live it as long as he could, so why stop him? Why take away his routine? Why take away a good chunk of his reason for living? I can't imagine anyone not being supportive of him, and the deluge of well-wishers bore that out.

"(Trebek) had an athlete's mentality, a play-through-pain toughness, in his approach," she said. "The cancer was aggressive enough, but he was aggressive in return, showing the disease no quarter. He was one hell of a fighter.

"I'd heard the stories of him some-

times writhing and crying in pain backstage, and he told 'Good Morning America' about the depression that came with the battle. But every show, the music swelled, Johnny Gilbert emoted, "This Issss ... 'Jeopardy!'" and Alex stepped onto the stage to the applause, looking and sounding every bit the picture of health and vitality."

Trebek's final taped shows will



run through, ironically, Christmas night. At some point, it is presumed that another host will be selected (GOAT Ken Jennings, among others, has been rumored), but it is clear that no one will ever truly re-

place Alex Trebek.

"The person who succeeds him will probably have a hard time, especially at first," Fried predicted. "I hope the audience will cut (him or her) some slack, and let (him or her) grow into the job, let (him or her) build a relationship with the contestants and the viewers, as Alex did at the beginning.

"After all, Trebek was Trebek, and whatever the next host brings will be their own personality, their own touch.

"He and the show are synonymous, and they'll continue to be so, the way Art Fleming was with the original show," Fried said. "I mean, how can it be otherwise when one hosts a show for 36 years, and accumulates an entire case of Emmys and becomes a cultural icon?

"A show's host, be it a game show or a talk show or a newscast, sets the tone and sets the standard, and Alex Trebek set one lofty platinum standard."

Indeed, 7 p.m. will just never be the same.

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COOKING WITH THE BLUES

By Jack Chaplin

This is the end of the year that I call "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly." On a Sunday in early January I catered an 80th birthday party for Ann, my great Friend Richie's Mother-in-Law, for over 100 people and I felt great. At the end, I had a few shots of Crown and a couple of Coffee Porters and joined the festivities! Things progressed over the next four days, where I couldn't walk 50 feet and couldn't breathe. I got up at 2 a.m., telling LaKisha I needed to go to the E.R. I was panicked and knew I was in trouble. I sat on the couch for a few hours drinking some hot black coffee and remembering my Mom's words, "never leave the house without getting cleaned up!" I had to take a shower before we left. I thought this could be the end and told the what-ifs if I didn't make it. LaKisha wheeled me into the E.R. because I couldn't make the walk-in. After spending a few hours I was admitted, and what a time to happen, the Patriots were in the playoffs. I had never spent that much time in a hospital in all my adult life. I have to say everyone at L&M was great, and when I got out, it felt like I had been away for months. As a side note, the food was actually very good! I haven't had the antibody test yet, but I honestly believe I had COVID.

Next came the shutdown at the restaurant where we were forced to do takeout only. Things were getting sketchy; I worried for the customers, my family, myself, and the staff, our health was most important. Financially things were getting hard; we were slipping further into the hole each week with business dropping off, people were afraid to come out to eat. I was glad when our Governor called for the shutdown. I had been scheduled for heart bypass surgery at Yale in March, but I decided to put it off. I didn't want to



be trapped in the hospital with cases exploding in New York and getting closer by the day. I didn't want my family not to be able to visit if the hospital had a lockdown.

The old saying, "There Is A Silver Lining In Every Cloud." The silver lining for me was that I was able to get weeks to do whatever I wanted each day because of the shutdown. I didn't have a schedule to follow daily, and the demands of owning a restaurant, Covid gave me a much-needed break and rest that I needed. At the restaurant, we did some takeout pizzas and some charity work but nothing too strenuous. My good Friend brought Big Betty down on a few weekends where we set up to serve some badass BBQ. He hand-built that beautiful old girl, and she produces some of the best Q I've ever eaten, the happy customers over those few days can attest. Dave Pottie, our peerless leader, being one. The first day was pouring down rain, we had set up a big tent, and it was coming down in buckets. Our good neighbor Robert, from the Right Path Organic Cafe, gave us another pop-up tent that we used as well. We sold out of every last bit

of Pulled Pork, Ribs, Chicken, Sausage, Mac & Cheese, Corn Bread, Cajun Cole Slaw, Potato Salad, and Baked Beans. It was a workout, but having been closed to the public for a few months, it was great to see so many friends and bask in the warm support. Even the Mayor and His Wife, Mary, stopped by.

As summer came and went, I decided it was time to have the surgery and scheduled it for the end of September. It seemed so far off, but as the weeks went by, the day was getting closer. I was feeling my mortality and looking at each day as if it could be my last. All the little things we take for granted seemed so much more important. All the beautiful views that we have living on the coast. I have great friends and family, LaKisha, the woman I love and who makes me so happy each day. My wonderful daughters Rachel and Luci, who I always say are my life's greatest accomplishments. I spent time w/ my boxer Axel and my cat Vanessa because of Covid has made our bonds so much closer, almost to the point of creat-

ing separation anxiety when we're apart! Sounds Crazy, Right! Having so much time I became a bird watcher; I would spend hours videoing birds, especially Cardinals, and sitting on my deck watching the chipmunk, Chip, steal all my bird food. I would sit each day doing the Day's crossword puzzle and even have enough time to do the daily Word Jumble.

As the final day came close I had talked to my Pastor, Jack, and it came clear to me to leave it in God's hands and trust in my surgeon and his staff to get me through. I put the worry out of my mind and to be thankful for the wonderful life that I have lived. It has been two months since my surgery, and I am feeling great with God's blessing. I am thankful for each day, no matter what is going on politically, financially, or otherwise. In regards to the restaurant business, time will tell, taking things one day at a time. My landlord has been tremendous and is giving me breathing room to try to keep the doors open. The majority of us are all in the same boat, and

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we have to be patient and let time heal all, as they say. If possible, we need to lend a helping hand where and whenever we can. We need to be thankful for what we have and not fret about what we have lost. Just waking up each day and getting to live another day is a gift not to be squandered! We'll see what next year's chapters have to offer. I am thankful for the peaks and valleys of 2020. I look forward to what lies ahead in 2021; I look forward to the journey, To Be Alive, That Is The Good!

Another good thing about 2020, New London has a new kid on the block. Tony D's Pasta Shop next door to the legendary Tony D's Restaurant - is one of the best dining spots the town offers. Two summers ago, they open Tony D's Craft Creamery in Niantic, making the best ice cream anywhere in these parts, maybe the country. Often this summer we would make the trek over to savor the frozen delights, one time racing to beat the 9:00 closing arriving within seconds! I believe Anthony Jr. spear-headed the concept, and the selections are brilliant. My only wish is that they opened year-round; they shut it down for the winter. Back to the pasta shop. It is located in the most recent California Fruit space, Fiddleheads occupies the original location. The shop is just what New London needs with its vast Italian population, besides, who doesn't like fresh pasta? LaKisha picked up some Cheese Ravioli last week, and we had some for our second course on Thanksgiving. It had so much cheesy flavor that it didn't call for any additional Parmesan! It is what I call seasoned to perfection. I made my sauce from my favorite Alta Cucina tomatoes, but Tony's has a variety of sauces, meatballs, and other types of fresh pasta. The ravioli was so rich that a few at a time were plenty; we had three separate meals from one order. If Anthony is behind this venture, my hats off yet again, but regardless this extension of the Mother ship is a sure winner!

I hope the rest of the holidays are filled with happiness and good health. Keep Your Chin Up, Head
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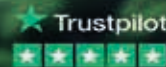


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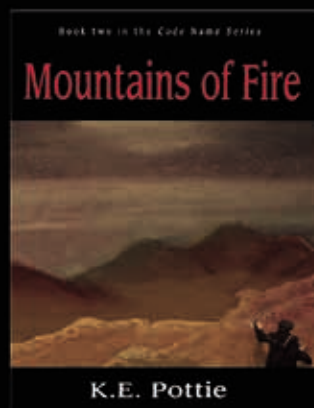


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