

Sound

Magazine



Waves

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December 2022

An Interview
with

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- Ken Serio
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"The Last of His Kind: A Tribute to Jerry Lee Lewis"

By Mark T. Gould

"Who knew it would be me?"

With those words, the immortal Jerry Lee Lewis succinctly summed up his final place in the history of rock 'n' roll.

Lewis, who died on October 28 at the age of 87, was indeed the final living creator present at the birth explosion of rock 'n' roll, along with his Fifties contemporaries Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Elvis Presley.

Nicknamed "The Killer," Lewis was a pioneer of rock and roll and rockabilly music. He made his first recordings in 1952 at Cosimo Matassa's J&M Studio in New Orleans, followed by recordings in 1956 at Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee.

His first release, "Crazy Arms," sold 300,000 copies in the South, but it was his 1957 hit, "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," that shot Lewis to worldwide fame. He followed that with the major hits "Great Balls of Fire", "Breathless", and "High School Confidential."

His rock and roll career then faltered in the wake of his marriage to Myra Gale Brown, his 13-year-old cousin once removed.

His popularity quickly eroded following the scandal and with few exceptions such as a cover of Ray Charles's "What'd I Say," he did not have much chart success in the early 1960s.

Despite that, his live performances were increasingly wild and energetic. His 1964 live album, "Live at the Star Club, Hamburg," is regarded by many music journalists and fans in general as one of the wildest and greatest live rock albums ever.

In 1968, Lewis made a transition into country music and had hits with songs such as "Another Place, Another Time." That reignited his career, and throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, he regularly topped the country-western charts.

Throughout his seven-decade career, Lewis had 30 songs reach the Top 10 on the Billboard Country and Western Chart. His No. 1 country hits included "To Make Love Sweetener for You," "There Must Be More to Love Than This," "Would You Take Another Chance on Me," and "Me and Bobby McGee."

Lewis had a dozen gold records in rock and country. He won four Grammy awards, including a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and two Grammy Hall of Fame Awards.

He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986, and his pioneering contribution to the genre was recognized by the Rockabilly Hall of Fame. He was also a member of the inaugural class inducted into the Memphis Music Hall of Fame. He was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2022.

Despite all that musical success, Lewis' personal life continued in shambles.

He was married seven times, including bigamous marriages

and the infamous union with his underage cousin. He had six children.

When he was 16, he married Dorothy Barton, the daughter of a preacher. Their union lasted for 20 months, from February 1952 to October 1953.

Lewis's second marriage, in September 1953 to Sally Jane Mitcham, was of dubious validity because it occurred 23 days before his divorce from Barton was final. After four years, he filed for divorce in October 1957.

His third marriage was to 13-year-old Myra Gale Brown, his first cousin once removed, on December 12, 1957. His divorce from Jane Mitcham was not finalized before the ceremony took place, so he remarried Brown on June 4, 1958.

His fourth marriage was to Jaren Elizabeth Gunn Pate from October 1971 to June 8, 1982. Pate drowned in a swimming pool at the home of a friend with whom she was staying, several weeks before divorce proceedings could be finalized.

Lewis's fifth marriage, to Shawn Stephens, lasted 77 days, from June to August 1983, ending with her death from an overdose of methadone.

His sixth marriage, to Kerrie McCarver, lasted 21 years, from April 1984 to June 2005.

Lewis married his seventh wife Judith Lewis, his former wife/cousin Myra Gale Brown's brother's former wife, on March 9, 2012.

The next day, Lewis severed business ties with his daughter, Phoebe Lewis-Loftin, who was his

manager, and revoked her power of attorney. In 2017, Lewis sued his daughter and her husband, claiming that she owed him substantial sums of money.

In September 1976, while watching television, Lewis accidentally shot his bass player, Norman Owens, in the chest with a .357 Magnum handgun after announcing, "I'm going to shoot that Coca-Cola bottle over there or my name ain't Jerry Lee Lewis." Owens survived and filed a lawsuit against Lewis.

Two months later, Lewis drove his Lincoln Continental into the front gates of Graceland, Presley's mansion in Memphis, just hours after being arrested and jailed on a drunken-driving charge. A guard later told the police that Lewis, waving a pistol, had demanded to see Presley and refused to leave.

Despite his personal foibles, there is no way to underestimate his impact on the birth and growth of rock 'n' roll, and his musical disciples knew that better than anyone.

Shortly after his death, none other than Bob Dylan paid him tribute with the only alteration to his European tour set list, performing Lewis' "I Can't Seem To Say Goodbye" as the final encore of his Nottingham, England show.

"Jerry Lee will live forever, we all know that," Dylan, who seldom, if ever, talks to his audiences, said that night.

"Without Jerry Lee Lewis, I wouldn't have become who I am today," said Elton John. "He was groundbreaking and exciting, and he pulverized the piano. A brilliant singer too. Thank you for your trailblazing inspiration and all the rock 'n' roll memories."

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MUSIC NOTES

“Two Dog Night: The Muse of Minnesota Writes Again”

By Mark T. Gould

“That is damn good. Damn good.”
– Elder Metsa, reviewing his son Paul
Metsa, March 2014.

Elder Metsa, possibly the second hippest guy in Minnesota (you’re about to see who is the first), was so right.

He was talking about his son, Paul Metsa’s, arguably best song, “Jack Ruby,” but, truth be told, he could have been talking about pretty much everything Paul Metsa has written over the years.

Paul’s newest book, “Alphabet Jazz,” is proof positive of that.

Metsa is a 67-year-old, Minneapolis-based musician, poet, songwriter, and storyteller of incredible warmth, empathy, and insight.

Upon the release of his last book, “Blue Guitar Highway,” a mere decade ago, I wrote that he was a “writer who can walk in Bob Dylan’s shoes.”

I meant that then, and, upon reading “Alphabet Jazz,” I mean it even more now.

The subtitle of “Jazz” is “poetry, prose, stories, and songs,” and that is just about smack dab on the money.

Frankly, I have never been much of a fan of poetry, but in Metsa’s hand, he brings even an iambic pentameter agnostic like me into his remarkable world.

Written between 1984 and 2022, “Alphabet Jazz” is a tour-de-force, equal parts remembrance, memorial, epitaph, and celebration of a life well lived.

Of course, not all the words here are Metsa’s, as his two dogs, his beloved Blackie and Blue, each contribute prose to the project.

But, don’t take my word, or even



Blackie or Blue’s word for it.

Here’s the Minnesota Muse in his own words.

On his mother, Bess Metsa: “She was my biggest fan and supporter, driving me to my first gigs until I got my driver’s license. I miss her like the meadow would miss the wind and the rain.”

On his wheelchair-bound friend, Larry Kegan: “He could enter a room like Liz Taylor, head held high, dressed in a coat of many colors, wheeled by his Mexican mafia, brimming with a dignity that he was always willing to share.”

On seeing a Bob Dylan concert in a big

can imagine her, the only girl in junior high to enjoy an occasional pack of cigarettes, like the protagonist in the song ‘Leader of the Pack.’”

On his musical partner Willie Murphy: “He caressed his muse as he wrestled the toxic dual demons of the music business, and those of his own making, to eventually emerge bloody, unbowed, and pulsing as the heart and soul of the Minneapolis music scene.”

On his Dad, Elder Metsa: “He always summoned and referred to what the Finns called ‘sisu,’ or inner strength, perhaps best defined as determination beyond all reason. He had that in spades, until the very end.”

On a critique from the legendary Townes Van Zandt: “Nothing like getting seriously dissed by the Jesus of songwriters.”

On fellow musician, pianist Jeanne Peterson: “She swung like Count Basie and played solos like Dave Brubeck, punctuated by the raising of her right hand off the keyboard a’ la Liberace after she nailed whatever her heart and soul had to say.”

On playing gigs with Dave Morton: “Honest music, played without pretension or rehearsal, for free-spirited dancing fools, recalling an earlier era and smothered in clouds of homegrown marijuana.”

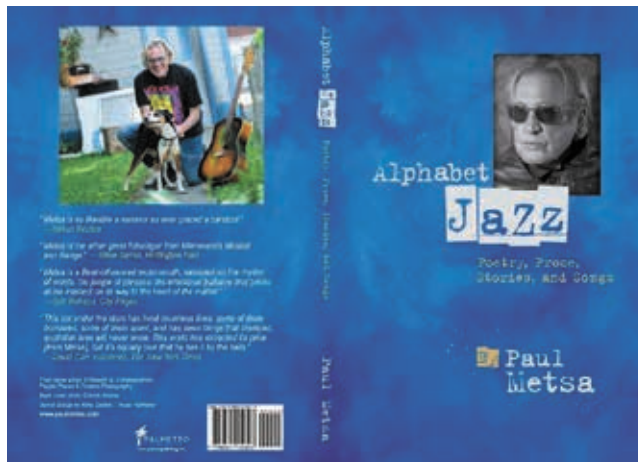
I’d quote what he wrote about Blackie and Blue, but then I’d start bawling while I’m typing this out.

So, finally on Paul Metsa himself: “The beauty of obscurity is you never go out of style.”

Funny, and ironic, in a way, because, as “Alphabet Jazz” reveals time and again, vignette after vignette, Paul Metsa is far from obscure, and could never go out of style, as he continues his journey as Minnesota’s “other Dylan.”

Run out and buy this book, and bask in Paul Metsa’s artistry, honesty, compassion, elegance, and passion.

And, tell ‘em Blackie and Blue sent you.



arena: “Those formats are akin to seeing a Boris Spassky chess demonstration in the Mall of America.”

On the concert promoter Sue McLean, who gave his career a boost: “I



JERRY LEE LEWIS CONTINUED

"Sad to hear of the passing of Jerry Lee Lewis," John Fogerty said. "Love his music, and I was hugely influenced by his records and live performances which were always full of fire and inspiration! No one could touch him!"

"The killer Jerry Lee Lewis passed on today. What an honor it was to be his friend," said Toby Keith. "His passing closes out an explosive era of American music. Last man standing baby!!!"

"The last and wildest of the pioneers is gone," Steve Van Zandt said. "Jerry Lee did all one could possibly do with a piano. His religion tortured his soul with guilt, but he did what he had to do in spite of knowing he was going to hell for rock 'n' roll. Now that's commitment!"

Music critic Robert Christgau said of Lewis: "His drive, his timing, his offhand vocal power, his unmistakable boogie-plus piano, and his absolute confidence in the face of the void make Jerry Lee the quintessential rock and roller."

Commitment. Pioneer. Inspiration. Fire. Trailblazer.

Simply put, rock 'n' roller.

In short, The Killer.



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GRAMMA'S ATTIC REVUE

"The Meadows Brothers The Harmony of Brothers"

By Gramma

Many years ago ...probably early 2011 I was privileged to hear three young men perform together. I was impressed by their music, and their way of blending old folk music with the music that they had written. They were taking songs that we may have known and doing them the way that they had originally been written. The boys were young and yet the way they brought the music forth was old-school. I felt as if I was meeting at least one old soul. I introduced myself and told them that I would love to have them on my radio show. Friendships were started. They came to WCNI and then I proceeded to attempt to book them everywhere that I could. It was a fun attempt on my part of being a band manager... lol. Oh well it was fun for a time. These young men went on to do their own thing bigger and better without me and for that I am incredibly happy and pleased with how far they have come.

Ian and Dustin grew up surrounded by music. Their Dad Garth was in the church choir and loved many various genres of music which he played at home. Both guys were serious history buffs so looking for old music and the history that went with it was just a thing that they did. I laugh that one of the first songs that I ever heard them do was The Monkey and The Engineer. It was full of humor and harmonies, and they performed it like they owned it. It was amazing to watch them be so professional at such young ages.

Dustin is the youngest of the pair and is just under 2 years younger than Ian. They put together their first band when they were in the fourth and fifth

6 SOUND WAVES



grades with their cousins. The name of that band was called On Trial and they played one gig. Their second band was formed with another local talent Ryan Newman. They were called Say What and played together for about 6 years. Say What made quite a name for itself, and the band was performing all over the place and invited to play often. They had a great bluesy sound and were well



liked and well respected in the music community. This band lasted throughout high school, but when they split up Ian and Dustin went on to make music on their own. As a duo the guys continued to explore diverse types of music but really wanted to play their originals. As brothers they decided that it was just easier to go forward with that goal

with just the two of them and basically that is where they are at now. Two brothers singing in perfect harmonies, songs that they found in the history of music and putting their own originals into the mix of what they would play on stage.

When talking with Ian and Dustin I asked who the song writer was of the two of them. Dustin was quick to come forward that Ian was the one that wrote most of the songs, but it was Ian that said that Dustin added what they call "The Special Sauce". After playing together for a while Dustin decided to Sauce it up a bit and picked up the harmonica. This definitely adds some depth to the songs that they do. In the writing of their originals Ian says that he tends to get stuck in what he calls Musical ruts sometimes and may go for a year or two without writing any songs. He finds that there are times that he must step out of his "Wheelhouse" to bring out the new music that he writes. He needs to make a conscious effort to do just that. Dustin says that he just loves good music of lots of different genres and it all depends on his mood as to where he goes to seek the music that he wants to listen to. He finds that this helps when he is adding the "Special Sauce" to the songs that his brother brings to him.

At this point in time that guys have played at many different venues around the country and of course locally. One of the gigs that I especially remember was when they opened for Don McLean at the Garde Art Center in New London Ct. The gig was supposed to be at Harkness as Part of the summer music series put on by Bring our Music back. There was a huge storm predicted and the Garde was kind enough to allow us to bring the concert inside. The play bill included Kala Farnham who is now Connecticut's 18th State troubadour, The Meadows Brothers, and The Beehive Queen herself Christine Ohlman. These three acts opened for Don McLean of American Pie fame. It was a night to remember for all of us. Dustin and Ian speak of a couple other places that they have played that mean a lot to them. There is an artist

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than lives in Chester CT., by the name of Leif Nilsson. He has been putting on concerts in his gallery and in the beautiful garden outside of the gallery. He has been extremely supportive of The Meadows Brothers, and they have played there many times. You can find him on Facebook and see what he has coming up for this season in His gallery. Another venue that has supported Ian and Dustin is The Katherine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center in Old Saybrook Ct. The Meadows Brothers have played there on many occasions and the pictures attached to this article are taken by Matthew Male and were taken at their last show at the Kate just a couple of weeks ago. The last time that I say the guys live was at a show at The Hygienic Art Park in New London Ct. They were part of a free outdoor concert series put on by the Hygienic and organizes by Rich Martin, owner of the Telegraph on Golden St. Here in New London. They are taking a quiet time for this season as they work on two upcoming albums. One of them will be a rerecording of past favorites and the second one will be a whole new record of songs that

they are now working on perfecting. New music from the Meadows Brothers is being recorded and produced by the amazing Tracy Walton at On Deck Studio. ...This author can hardly wait!!!

Some of the artists that have influenced Dustin and Ian are Steel rail Blues and John Prine. If you are lucky, you can also hear them perform their version of Rocky Raccoon. It is definitely a song that they bring their own flavor to. Another band that they listen to and that they turned this Gramma onto is The Old Crow Medicine Show. A band that they use to follow closely as younger men and now I follow as an older woman. It is a great and extremely energetic show to experience.

If you would like to learn more about The Meadows Brothers you can find them at their website www.Meadows-Brothers.com. This site will lead you to all of their social media and also link you to where they may be playing and where you may find all of their recorded music. An upcoming gig that I know of is in the spring at a local house concert. I can tell you that that is a show that I will not miss.

Photo Credit: Matthew Male
Lighting Designer: Mike Demers

Thank you for taking a moment to read what I have shared about these extraordinarily talented brothers. I hope that you all have an amazing Holiday season no matter what holiday that you may celebrate. I celebrate the holiday of loving all of you. Stay safe and get out there and support Local Music. Until next year, may your days Be Blessed!!!



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LOCAL BEAT

“PRAISE FOR THE CLASSIC AGE OF 80s SYNTHESIZER SOUNDTRACK”

By Andrew Kerbs

The synthesizer keyboard has had a long history in popular music and film for decades now. The instrument gained ascendancy in the 70s and was adapted to help a makeshift keyboard play pre-recorded notes from various instruments. Thus, hard rock bands could save money and space instead of hiring an orchestra to back them up on tour. David Bowie's use of synthesizers on his obtuse album *Low* might have sounded like a funeral dirge, but the brooding cut “Warszawa” and Kraftwerk's tunnel-like walls of keyboard sounds on “Trans-Europe Express” pioneered the use of the synthesizer as a front and center instrument.

The synthesizer revolution of the opening of the 80s spawned various “new-wave” artists. The Cars used it on their 1st hit “Just What I Needed.” Country Singer Kim Carnes used them to great effect on the sensuously funny “Betty Davis Eyes.” Punker Billy Idol used an analog pitch shifter on an Oberheim or Prophet synthesizer to play haunting wave sounds on “Eyes Without A Face” as he channeled his best Elvis-meets-Bowie impersonation on MTV. Finally, Tom Bailey of the Thompson Twins used the same technique on the same synth to make their most under-rated love song “Storm On the Sea” be just off-key enough to be eerie and edgy but warmer and cascading once he finally gets it going by shifting the song to a fuller major key.

The synthesizer revolution of the opening of the 80s also spawned that decade's best film scores. The true pioneer in marrying new-wave music to film is John Carpenter, producer for horror films like “Vampires” and the “Halloween” franchise. John Carpenter's dark poignant films and soundtracks best epitomized this era. He also used

the Prophet brand of keyboards (as well as a Roland JP and Korg Triton) to pioneer the killer-thriller sounds of Halloween II and III just as the sequels market was simmering. The eerie sci-fi chase scenes of hit movie *Starman* would not have been possible without John's Synclavier. Neither would Jeff Bridges metamorphosis from a blob of fetal ectoplasm into a nude, post-pubescent male during which John plays vox humana (“wahs” I once sampled to create a dub-step beat mix). Carpenter also plays sadder, more sentimental choral symphonies on his Synclavier which turned *Starman* into a tear-jerker for that age. The Roland JP synthesizer he used to achieve some of his sounds was different from the Roland D “hybrid, La Synthesis” sound which had yet to be invented. Such synthesizers could thus play a variety of original sounds which added a chilling sound to many films of the 70s and 80s.

Other, more underrated but no less notable synth film composers of the 80s include Rob Walsh who scored the strident backdrop to Sho Kosugi's energetic action flick *Revenge of the Ninja*. Walsh was the man behind the black sonic curtain of sound: the backdrop for dark assassination scenes using staccato synthesizer bangs to punctuate deaths by blowdarts in bathtubs, garroting in bedrooms and by star-knives in fountains – or when the Ninja nails some unsuspecting mafia office worker with a spring-blade loaded staff. Brooding synthesizers ring when the bodies are discovered and the tone of this sadistic film is lightened up only by metallic glint of the villainous ninja's silver mask and by his blond-bombshell of a co-star Ashley Ferrara. Rob's Oberheim synthesizer was similar to Billy Idol's and had more than enough stridence to give his mob martial arts movie its knife-edged sound.

Dark soundtrack music got increasingly humdrum at century's close as the likes of *The Crow* soundtrack scrubbed dark film music of much of its synthesized finesse, with lazy bass and buzz-

saw guitar on the Cure's “Slow Burn” or Nine-Inch-Nail's “Dead Souls” (a Joy Division cover). As for pop music, goth-rockers failed to create a wall of synthesizer sounds as Idol and Bowie had. Depeche Mode and Marilyn Manson instead used synthesizers to merely mark their beats and guitar on hits “Mechanical Animals” and “Enjoy the Silence.” However, fans of 80s and 90s music carried memories of the keyb-hooks from their youth to pique a re-newed interest in the genre (and in the 80s era in general) . . . well into the 21st century. This is in no small part to the enduring legacy of film musicians like John Carpenter who has made many horror movie sequels and reboots since the early 2000s. This includes *Halloween* but also the modern reboot of *Firestarter* whose whose keyb-hooks and guitars surpasses even Tangerine Dream's trance-like treatments of the 1984 original.

Take all of the above sci-fi weirdness and violent synthesized mayhem and you get the horror score for recent Netflix series “Stranger Things.” Kyle Dixon and Mike Stein of band SURVIVE play Oberheim and Prophet keyboards to recreate the 80s-style thriller in a variety of different ways. This includes the chilling 9-note arpeggiated bass synthesizer riff during the series opening credits (a *Halloween 3* rip-off). Mike and Kyle's chillingly buzzy synths are essential during several points along the series . . . including the phantasmic shots of haunted home life with dark wooden paneling dimly lit by subdued yellow lamps . . . during a cop's infiltration of Dr. Papa's creepy, sterile techno-medical laboratory or of the impossible quagmire known as the “Upside Down.” The soundtrack for the opening credits keeps you coming back binging for more.

Few sound effects keep an audience glued to the screen of a good sci fi or horror film series than a well-synthesized soundtrack. We all have such greats as Carpenter, Walsh and now Dixon and Stein to thank for that. Keep watching and listening . . .



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So Your Child Wants To Be A Rock Star, BUYING GUIDE!

by Adrian Webb



Well it's that gift giving holiday season again when your credit card will be swiped more times than you care to count. But this year is special because your child wants to play a musical instrument, and be the next YouTube star. In today's social media climate that's not surprising. Everywhere you look you see many mini-sized musical virtuoso's on Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and the like with amazing voices or playing every instrument under the sun and playing them well. However, as the vision of your child becoming famous, wealthy, and supporting you in your old age starts to fade... Reality sets in! Your child's musical journey can cost as much as several thousand dollars for just the instrument if you don't know how to shop, and that doesn't include all the extras like lessons. The biggest nightmare is after all that effort and money you invested, your kid may decide it's not for them. Yep, it happens everyday, BUT RELAX!! I'm here to help. For years I've used my experience to advise many family and friends who find themselves in this same predicament. That's why I decided to write this Buying Guide for the parents of first time rock star wannabe's in your family. **Keep in mind that everything in this guide also pertains to adults whom are also starting their musical journey. Many adults especially during Covid have added learning an instrument to their bucket list. So this buying guide is valid for both young and old.

COMMUNICATION – Before anything you need to find out what kind of music does the person want to play. If it's learning just enough to play a few major chords for family and friends, maybe an acoustic guitar is the better choice. If the person loves Rock, or heavy metal then an electric guitar would be the way to go. **Important first guitar suggestion: You "should" start the beginner guitar player with a classical nylon string guitar. The nylon strings are easier on a beginner's fingers. It takes at least a month of playing everyday for a beginner to develop calluses on the finger tips for guitar string not to hurt, and many beginners quit long before the month is up. A classical style guitar may not be as "cool" as a Gibson Flying V but it's the best way for a beginner to start.

BUYING USED – Lets begin the buying process with "used" instruments and why buying used is the way to go. When it comes to used instruments the world is your oyster because there are sooo many good-intention first timers who buy the instrument, and for one reason or another QUIT! If you know where to look you can find quality instruments that sell for pennies on the dollar.

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On-line sites like eBay and Craigs List, and Reverb.com lets you shop Used instruments from the comfort of your home but please note that when buying from a local private party always meet in a public place, preferably in the day light hours.

The majority of people I've met through private sales have been very nice but it can't hurt to be careful. You also have music stores like Guitar Center, Sam Ash, that sell the used instruments they took in trade. You often pay a little more for used equipment bought in a retail store but the store will stand behind the purchase 100%, and you get to try before you buy. However, be aware the chain music stores like Guitar Center and Sam Ash are corporate owned and even the store manager doesn't have the authority to adjust prices. If you want the security of buying used from a retail store, but also has the flexible pricing, a Mom & Pop store is your best bet because they are self-owned and can give the best price possible to make the sale. I personally had an excellent experience with "Spindrift Guitars" in New London, and "Alpha Audio Works" in Mystic. Plus there's "Ron's Guitars" that recently reopened in Groton. Aside from retail music stores there is always pawn shops that usually have anywhere from a few used instruments for sale to whole sections of the shop devoted to used instruments. Even Facebook has a section called Market Place where used musical instruments are bought & sold by Facebook members. As for larger instruments like a drum set, a trombone or piano the buyer gets bonus leverage to negotiate a great price because often, the first thing a parent (or spouse) wants if the instrument isn't being used is to get the instrument out of the house. I've even seen home owners giving away baby grand pianos to free up space.

BUYING NEW – Have you walked into a music store lately? The prices for most new equipment are sky high but it's not the store's fault. As a matter of fact what many people don't know is their profit margins are razor thin. It's the material, the labor, and shipping costs that have driven prices up to prohibitive levels. But even buying new with factory warranty at huge discounted prices is possible if you know what to look for. Gibson and Fender will always be the heavy hitters in the musical instrument industry, all the music celebrities play them, and all the kids want them. Their USA made guitars run in the thousands but each of these brands has their own more affordable economy label to attract a wider range of buyers. Gibson has Epiphone and Fender has Squire, but even a decent Squire or Epiphone electric guitar will set you back \$400+ dollars and then you will have the cost of an amp and cables, and lessons. Info tidbit: guitar amplifiers come in two flavors, tube and solid state. For a beginner I would

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SOUND WAVES 9



BAND DATES

THE CARTELLS

4 - Maugle Sierra, Ledyard, CT 3-6pm
 17 - Maugle Sierra, Ledyard, CT 2:30-5:30pm
 17 - Bill's Seafood, Westbrook, CT 7:30-10:30pm
 24 - Wolf Den, Montville, CT 8-9:30pm
 25 - Wolf Den, Montville, CT 7pm
 31 - Haley Mansion, Mystic, CT 7pm

CHRISTOPHER JOHN

1 - Rocks 21, Mystic, CT 5-8
 2,8 - Rosy Tomorrows, Danbury, CT 6-9
 3,29 - Stumble Inne, Old Lyme, CT 7-10
 5 - Dublin, E. Hampton, CT 5-8
 10 - Glendale Grill, Easthampton, MA 6-10
 11 - Fort Hill Brewery, Easthampton, MA 3:30-5:30
 16 - Friar Tucks, Mystic, CT 9-12
 17,23 - Village Pizza, Preston, CT 8-11
 18 - Ariggonni Winery, Portland, CT 1:30-5:30
 24 - The Tavern, Westfield, MA 1-4
 30 - Catamount Ski, Hillsdale, NY 11:30-3:30

CHRIS COFONI

2,5 - Angie's, Mystic, CT 8pm

FAKE EXPERIENCE BAND

2 - Trillium Farm, N. Stonington, CT 6:30-10pm
 9 - Village Pizza, Preston, CT 8-11

F & BLUES BAND

Jan. 1 - Hard Rock, Mashentucket, CT 11-4

JAMES HARRIS

7,12,14,16,21,28 - Daniel Packer, Mystic, CT 9pm
 2 - The Barn, Groton, CT 5-7pm
 2 - Friar Tucks, Mystic, CT 9pm
 3,10 - Maugle Sierra, Ledyard, CT 3pm
 8 - Village Pizza, Preston, CT 8pm
 9,16 - Rocks 21, Mystic, CT 4pm
 9 - Thirsty Beaver, Westerly, RI 8pm
 18 - Bridge, Westerly, RI 12pm
 20 - Angies, Mystic, CT 5pm
 22 - Shunock River Brewery, N. Stonington, CT 5:30pm

MYSTIC PROPHETS

9,7 - The Bridge, Westerly, RI 10pm
 15 - Shunock River, N. Stonington, CT 5:30-8:30pm
 16 - Hog River Brewing, Hartford, CT 6:30-9:30pm
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18 - Taylor Brooke Brewery, Woodstock, CT 2-5pm

NICK BOSSE

2 - The Bridge, Westerly, RI 7-10pm
 3 - Erik's Church, Windham, ME 8-11pm
 7 - Wolf Den, Mohegan Sun, CT 8-10pm
 10 - Boomerangs, West Warwick, RI 8-11pm
 11 - Shunock Brewery, N. Stonington, CT 4-7pm
 16 - Thirsty Beaver, Westerly, RI 8-11pm
 23 - The Barn, Groton, CT 8-11pm
 27 - Olde Theater Diner, Coventry, RI 7-10pm
 30 - No Worries Brewery, Hamden, CT 7-9pm
 31 - Tamarack, Voluntown, CT 8:30-11:30pm

THE NIGHT SHAKERS

3 - JD's Roadhouse, Baltic, CT 8-11pm
 B10 - Black-Eyed Sally's, 8-11pm

RAMBLIN' DAN STEVENS

2,16 - 40 Thieves, Groton, CT 5pm
 3 - Hops 44, Storrs, CT 4:30pm
 6,13,20,27 - Nightingale's, Old Lyme, CT 6pm
 9 - Daniel Packer, Mystic, CT, 9:30pm
 10 - NewSylum Brewing Co., Newtown, CT 4pm
 11 - The Barn, Groton, CT 4pm
 15,30 - Woodfellas, New London, CT 6pm
 18 - Notch8, Bethel, CT noon

RED LIGHT

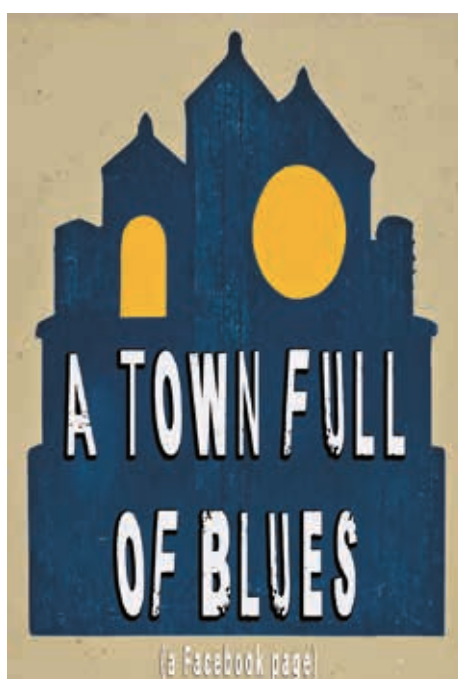
3 - Richoni's, Groton, CT 9pm
 9 - Last Resort, Smithfield, RI 8:30pm
 10 - Brown Derby, Uncasville, CT 9pm
 31 - Lansdowne Pub, Mohegan Sun 9pm

WOOLY MAMMOTH

31 - Knickerbocker, Westerly, RI 8pm

WOOLITE

10 - Daniel Packer, Mystic, CT 10pm
 15 - Dive Bar, Mystic, CT 6-9pm
 7,14,21,28 - Dive Bar, Mystic, CT 8-11pm



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A Town Full of Blues Interview with Bob and Fran Christina

Interviewers - Nick Castagna and Dana Neugent

Two brothers. One passion. Pounding drums.

Growing up in a large family Fran Christina (Roomful of Blues, Asleep at the Wheel and the Fabulous Thunderbirds) and Bob Christina (Young Neal, Dave Howard and the High-rollers and the Radio Kings) made a lot of noise in their family's cellar playing the drums. Fueled by their older brother Jimmy's blues record collection they graduated from the cellar, to the stage, to playing all over the world to large and appreciative audiences. They helped and encouraged each other over their careers and continue to do so as they recently collaborated on a soon to be released tribute album to the great Matt "Guitar" Murphy. Bob, producing and playing and

Fran, playing, singing and bringing on board many of his blues contemporaries. Their new album is as exciting and a joy to listen to as their lives have been. We caught up with the Christina Brothers at the venerable Knickerbocker Music Center in Westerly, RI and they told the story of two brothers on the blues highway.

What brought music into the Christina family?

Fran: Back when the Vetterito's owned the Knickerbocker it was an Italian function hall and they used to have weddings, or any time anyone got baptized they used to have parties and stuff. The first thing I remember about being here was the old Italians

playing mandolins, guitars and people jump around, singing and playing the tarantella (laughs) and eating spezzi which was great. That was my first memory of the Knickerbocker as a musical venue. For myself getting started it was my oldest brother Jimmy. There used to be a gas station, his friend's father owned a gas station on Liberty Street. They would get together because he worked the night shift so they ended up getting together, they had some guitars. They'd play the Everly Brothers and stuff like that. One time they said they needed a drummer. So I was like 11 or 12 years old. They gave me a pair of sticks and I'd go up there and bang on the oil cans while they played guitars. That's what got me off on the idea of playing drums. But I always banged on pots and pans and everything to drive my mother crazy.

Bob: Music was always in the family. Our parents loved it. They loved dancing. Where grandma's house was on Merritt Avenue near Pleasant Street right around the corner was the

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Baptist Church that you used to go to get your first kicks.

Fran: That was the thing that really flipped my switch too was that I'd go to sleep at my grandmother's house on Saturday night and she would get up early to go to early mass. So I would go to church with her really early so I could get out and go over to the Baptist church down at the end of the street and we'd sit outside and listen to the gospel which was fantastic. One day this nice old couple came out and said "Do you want to come in?" I didn't know if I was going to burn in hell for going into a church that wasn't catholic. So I went in and it was fantastic. It was like boom, boom (clapping his hands and singing. "Somebody help me!" And that



kind of stuff (laughs). I was like wow! This is great! After that a little time went on and I had my cover bands doing The Rolling Stones and whatever. Doing Long Tall Texan. Another thing was my brother Jimmy was really into the blues and had a great collection of B.B. King, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker and all that stuff. Then I heard Ray Charles and I put together the gospel I had heard at the church with Ray Charles and oh yeah that's it! That's what it's all about! And that was great! Shortly after that Duke Robillard discovered blues too. He had a little band here that would play at the Y on Friday and Saturday nights. It was an instrumental band

(The Variations) and they would play surf music, Pipeline, Dick Dale and the Ventures. And then he went off and discovered the blues. I think he went to Maine if I remember right and had this vision or something and came back and said "I want to start a blues band." And so he did.

Fran: He formed the Roomful around '67 which at that time was called Bull Tongue Plow I think (laughs). When I got in the band I remember going down the road trying to figure out what we're going to call the band? Are we going to call it Bull Tongue Plow or Roomful of Blues? And if we call it Roomful of Blues should it have one L or two Ls (laughs). Luckily we settled on Roomful of Blues and we started rolling on from there.

Where did you practice?

Fran: Our manager at the time Port Barlow was a guitar player who put out some albums and produced albums. We

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practiced at this house. I remember because there was no heat. And in my parents basement.

Bob: I remember I was about 8 years old. That was my first intro to the blues. Sitting on the basement steps saying myself "This is pretty cool." Franny, Al Copely on piano, Duke, Larry Peduzzi on bass and then I would open the door and go upstairs and a puff of smoke would come upstairs (laughing). It was just great listening to that music and I think I was kind of like the odd duck in school when I was in Junior High and listening to B.B. King, John Lee Hooker and Buddy Guy when everybody else was listening to Aerosmith. When I was in school my Music Appreciation teacher, Al Norcia, the dad of Sugar Ray Norcia of Sugar Ray and the Bluetones, a great, great guy. He used to stop by the class and tell stories about Franny. He was a great teacher. My Accounting teacher Ray Wright used to tell me about Franny. Your brother was hysterical. He used to put his legs behind his head and roll around on the baseball field

Fran: I used to drive him crazy. We were pretty terrible. I was in his Accounting class right. We would drive him nuts. I was on the baseball team and I was the pitcher and a pretty good pitcher. It was good because he didn't want to expel me from school for what I did because he needed me to pitch. So I could get away with just about anything.

Did you have any formal music training?

Bob: I was 15 years old I was into music and started taking guitar lessons for about 3 or 4 months and then I told the teacher "I'm not going to do it any more." She said "How come?" I said "Ahh I'm going to get some of my brothers hand me downs - his drums. To this day I still have some of the cymbals. That's when I switched over to drums. So that's how I got into drums. One cool story is my first drum set. Tony Manfredi who played and is a musician in town and he had a drum set for sale. An old fiber glass, chrome drum set of four pieces. He bought it from some guy in NYC. I think I paid around \$200 dollars for the thing and was all excited about it. Fran was on the road somewhere and I phone him and told him about the kit that I got and he goes "Jesus that sounds like my first drum kit" Did Daddy buy you that?

Fran: I remember I worked all summer to buy that kit.

Bob: And then it got stolen in Boston and probably its 8 years later or something Fran says to go downstairs, open up the bass drum and see if it has a red mark of Bridgeport on the inside of the bass drum. He said it could be mine. They only made a few of them.

Fran: Yes. This was when the guy was only making a particular brand in his home and he hadn't sold the rights to it yet.

Bob: I went down there and checked and sure enough it had Bridgeport on there.

Bob: I went back to Tony and said where did you get it? He said "Some guy in NYC."

Fran: It was my drum kit. What a coincidence.

Bob: You know I admired Franny's playing and the music and like a kid in a candy shop. Whenever he came home with the Boogey Brothers which I thought was Franny's first album it was the Ann Arbor Blues Festival 1972. In his band was Johnny Nicholas, Sarah Brown on bass, Steve Nardella on guitar. So whenever they went on the road and came by

the house I'd catch Sarah and Johnny all excited. Come play a tune with me? Let's go downstairs. So that was my first tune Long Tall Texan. (Laughing)

Fran: That was the big hit when we played at the Bowling Alley when I was 12 (more laughing).

Bob: I was working at Looney Tunes Records. Jeff Gardner owned Looney Tune Records and I was working there for awhile. It was great cause every Tuesday we couldn't wait for the next albums to come in. See who produced it, who's on it and this and that. And I thought I had all of Franny's albums and just in the blues section looking and holy mackerel Bobo Jenkins! This has got to be your first one. Its before the Ann Arbor Blues Festival. And he was living up in Michigan at the time. Johnny and the band were there so you guys were the House Band for all the greats.

Fran: All the players from Chicago and Detroit. Boogie Woogie Red and Arthur Gunter. Big Walter and Johnny Shines. Lightning Slim. Koko Taylor. Lefty Dizz. Big Walter Horton. Carey Bell. Mighty Joe Young. Everybody who came to town asked for us. There were some great shows at the (Ann Arbor) Blues Festival too. We backed up everybody.

Bob: Yeah what a great double album live. It was dedicated to Otis Spann. You open up the cover and you see Bonnie Raitt, Muddy Waters, Freddie King.

Fran: Sun Rah, Dr. John. It was a great lineup.

Then Commander Cody came to town and said come on you've got to come out to California. So we hopped in our Volkswagen Mini bus whose name was Rusty Bus (laughs). You could see the road going by underneath you. But we had our little plastic Jesus on the dashboard with a little targo switch in the ashtray that would light it up when we went through redneck country cause we were a bunch of hippies who might have got shot going through Mississippi. Yeah that was a great trip by the way. We stopped to see Mississippi Fred McDowell. They said we're going to Como (Mississippi) to see Mississippi Fred McDowell. I said who? Go down knock on the door to this trailer door in the piney woods and Fred goes "Boys come on in." Sat and played music, ate and then hit the road to California. A lot of fun.

At what point did you head to Texas?

Fran: Texas. That was a long way around.

Bob: You were with Asleep At the Wheel first.

Fran: Okay what happened was I took a little trip up to Nova Scotia because Port Barlow who was the manager of the first Roomful moved up to Nova Scotia, bought a bunch of land and said you've got to come up and visit. So we hopped on a plane in Detroit, flew up to Halifax and went down to visit. And just fell in love with the place and ended up buying... we didn't have any money to our name. I think we had \$1400 I think. And we found a house and 40 acres of land for 1200 Canadian dollars which was less than American. So anyway we bought a piece of land up there. We moved up in '74.

Bob: And your wife.

Fran: Yeah. My wife Julie Speed. Still my wife. Who took the original promo shot of the Roomful. So we were up there. John Nicholas had run into the T-Birds who were on tour from Texas. The T-Birds had two or three drummers at the time and the one that was with him didn't like being out of

Texas so he kinda split and that left them without a drummer. So John says well I know this guy, but he lives up in Nova Scotia. I don't know exactly where. He doesn't have a phone. We were living out in the woods. No phone, no electricity, no running water. So the way they got ahold of me was they called the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. So they sent the Mounties after me. The Mounties always get their man. We were training horses to make a few bucks and I was out there lunging a horse and I looked down the road and here comes some Mounties. I said to myself "Oh Jesus I wonder what I did?" So he comes up and says "Are you Fran Christina?" "I said "Yeah" He said "The Thunderbirds want you to meet them in London Ontario Friday for a gig and blah, blah, blah" I said "Oh okay." I had heard about the Thunderbirds, but I had never played with them or heard them. I got it on good authority that they were the band to meet. So it was getting on to Springtime and I had cabin fever so I decided to hitch hike to London, Ontario which was about 15-1600 miles (laughs). So I'm going over the top of New Brunswick through the woods at four o'clock in the morning pitch black with nothing but my kazoo just trying to scare the bears and the wolves away. No cars are coming. Like one every hour (imitates playing a kazoo)(laughs). Anyway I finally made it to London, Ontario and I'm sitting across the street from where the gig was supposed to happen. It kept going back and forth they were telling me "Oh no the first gig's in Toronto, oh no the first gig's in London, oh no we made a mistake. I'm thinking well jeez maybe this isn't the right gig. All of a sudden I see these guys walk out of the bar and I say "Hey are the Thunderbirds playing here tonight?" One of them says "No, no." I go jeez I've got about an hour and a half to get to Toronto which is hours away. And then the other guy says "Oh yeah, yeah. They are playing tonight" Okay and then the van pulls up and I was across the street and here's you know a guy gets out and you've to remember I've been living in the woods. I look like Paul Bunyan, I've got hair down to here. I have a beard. Yeah they looked at me and go, "Are you the drummer?" And I go "Yeah. Are you the band?"(laughs). And they were all slicked up you know. Keith (Ferguson) he had like boa boots up to his knees and Jimmie's got his coif. We went in and never played before, got on stage and it was like we played together for a thousand years. Like wow! I'm home. And we were just laughing all night. We were having a great time. So I would do the tours whenever they were east of the Mississippi. I'd go do tours. So for a couple of years... they wanted me to move to Texas, but I had just moved to Nova Scotia so I said "No I'm not ready to move yet because I just got here. So after a couple of years of doing tours with them since '75 I finally decided I wanted to get back into it and called them up and they said "Well we're in the middle of something and we can't fire the drummer right now." I said "Cool since Asleep At the Wheel had asked me I'll go play with the Wheel until you guys are ready". So that's what I did. I went to Texas and played with Asleep At the Wheel. The first day I get there we practiced for a day and went on the road for 343 days. That was my introduction. So after about a year and a half with them I hooked back up with the T-Birds permanently for the next 25 whatever years.

So the first connection for you was Johnny (Nicholas)?

Fran: Yeah Johnny was responsible. You know John was a friend. We used to throw rocks at each other. John lived in Pawcatuck. We lived in Westerly. So through the years we've had bands together, the Boogie Brothers, Black Cat and whatever. He knew what I did and he was in Asleep At the Wheel so they needed a drummer and they called me up. Its funny how Johnny was probably responsible for those two gigs.

Can you tell us about making it big?

Fran: Yeah we had a good run. You know we had top ten hits, top twenty hits, we went platinum, we sold probably a million and a quarter of Tuff Enuff. It was a hit. We did movie scores, we did movies.

Bob: The first movie was Roadie, but that was with Asleep At the Wheel. In 1980 that came out with Meatloaf and Blondie in it and Franny was with Asleep At the Wheel with Johnny Nicholas and they were in the scene at the Holiday Inn and it was a music convention.

When you recorded Tuff Enuff it was in London and then Clapton called up the studio and said "I'm sending over a couple of limos to pick you guys up for my birthday party."

Fran: Yeah he called up. We had just got into London and we're all burnt out from flying all night and the phone rings. So we get this call and (imitating an English accent) "Hello is this the Fabulous Thunderbirds room?" "Yeah this is the Fabulous Thunderbirds Room" "This is Eric" "Eric how you doin'?" "Who are you?" "Eric Clapton" "Hey Eric how you doin'?" So I think its one of the roadies messing with me. I say "How's Layla? What's Layla doing? And he's chuckling. And I'm messing with him. So he'd say something and I'd mess with him. Kinda in between laughs he says "We're having a little get together over at my place. Would you like to come? I'd like for you to come. And I'll send a car for you." I said, "Well okay Mr. Clapton just make sure its a stretch Bentley. (Laughs) We had a yuck. See you at the party. About an hour later there's a knock at the door. I go to answer the door and there's a guy standing there in a suit and white gloves. And I'm like "Who are you?" "I'm Mr. Clapton's driver. Are the T-Birds ready?" And I'm like, "Really?" That was Eric Clapton on the phone. How am I going to explain this one? (Laughs) Yeah so they drive us off into the countryside about an hour. Fantastic place on the English Channel. Eric's wife Patty Boyd answers the door. It was an incredible party. Stevie Winwood, the Stones, the Beatles. Everyone was there. I walked out on the balcony and over in the bushes zipping up his zipper was John Hurt. You never knew who was going to pop up.

Bob: You opened up for everybody from the Stones to...

Fran: Opened up for Eric Clapton, the Stones at the Cotton Bowl and the Houston Astro Dome. Gave B.B. King his Life Time Achievement Award.

Bob: That was great! You can catch that on a YouTube Video with Natalie Cole singing and the T-Birds.

You did the first B.B. King That Festival you did every year. The first one was Thunderbirds, Buddy Guy, Dr. John and B.B. King and then you all collaborated and you all went on the Jay Leno Show and that was great.

Fran: Yeah there was a lot of stuff happening in those three

or four years. We went around the world twice I think in 16 months in '86.

In Estonia. We played a show over there it was the first rock and roll show in an Iron Curtain country. And so this was huge scene. People came from all over the place. 400,000 people. As far as you can see.

Bob: Rockpile was a big fan of the T-Birds. You did a tour with them up there. And that's how Nick Lowe ended up producing "Butt Rockin'" which the Roomful of Blues played on, the horns. And Al Copley played on it. The following album was "Tough Enough" and Dave Edmunds from Rock Pile ended up producing that.

Fran: And Dave introduced us to Paul McCartney. Actually on Porky's revenge...do you remember that movie? We did the sound track with Dave Edmunds on that. We had just gotten back from Europe and I was in NY and we were doing a live show. We had just done like 6 weeks in a row and we were going to have a night off before we had to go to LA to do the sound track for "Porkies" So I thought we had a night off so we finished the show at the Bottom Line, two shows as a matter of fact and just went on partying, going crazy. My plan was to stay out till the break of day, crash when the sun was coming up and not wake up for a day and a half (laughs). So I came back to the hotel because I ran out of money about 4 o'clock in the morning and just as I'm heading out the door the phone rings and its Edmund, he says "You've got to get out here right now!" "What are you talking about we're not supposed to be out there till Friday. Its only Wednesday!" "No, no we're ready for you! We need you right now! You've got to get on the next thing smoking!" I'm like "Argh argh". So I get to the airport. Get out to LA. They drive me out to the studio, I'm getting into the studio and I had my bag with me. When I'm leaving home I grab a few books off the shelf for something to read when I'm in down time, we're on the bus or whatever. So I grab something and throw it in my bag. So I finished my part and I'm walking into the studio and I pull this book out of my bag and oh its "The Beatles" I walked into the studio and Dave's there (Dave Edmunds) and he's introducing me to the Engineer and he introduces me to this guy whose playing the guitar who I didn't know. He turns around and "Oh this is George." It was George Harrison (laughs). And I go "Hey George. You're not going to believe

it. I pulled this off the shelf. (In an English accent) "Oh this is one of the good ones." (Laughs) Yeah so I got them to sing with me, George Harrison and Dave Edmunds singing back up on that song.

Early on in your careers your mother and father were very supportive of your playing music.

Fran: Yeah they were the best. I'll tell you about my first drum set. It was Christmas and I was about 13 years old. My mother would ask me or my father would ask me what you want for Christmas blah, blah, blah. And I'd say a baseball glove, a bicycle a baseball bat or a scooter. Blah,blah,blah. Christmas morning comes and we get up, you know I've got a lot of brothers and sisters. There are seven of us. So we go to sit under the Christmas tree and we start opening packages. Here's one for Paula. Bob this is for you. Steve that's for you. Jimmy that's for you. And I sat there and sat there and nothing for me. And I ended up getting a pair of socks (laughs)

Bob: But you needed the socks.

Fran: Yeah I did I need the socks (laughs). And I'm thinking jeez I did something bad or something you know. But I didn't say anything. Evidently one of my brothers or sisters, one of them said something to my father at some point I guess and I guess he felt bad (laughs) and I had been bugging him for a set of drums, but we had a big family. He doesn't have a lot of money. Drum sets are expensive. And he said "Drum sets. Those are expensive. You don't play the drums do you?" "No, but I know that I can." I said "I know I can play them." And he never said anything about it again. And then it was a few weeks after Christmas and my father said "Fran come over here." My father he didn't talk a lot. He only talked when he had to. He took me over to his closet that nobody else went in but him. And he reaches up on the shelf and you know a lot of the old Italians would throw weddings and stuff like that where they'd have silver dollars that they'd throw for good luck at the wedding and things like that. He reaches up on the shelf and he grabs a bag of silver dollars and he goes, "Go buy yourself a drum set." I'm like woooooooo! (laughs)

Bob: They were big supporters of us playing and the bands that came through. When Franny was with the Roomful in the basement and later on in years Young Neal and the Vi-

CONTINUED PAGE 24

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BAR FLY JOURNALS

By Stephanie Shawn

Hello my sweet Bar Flies! Holy smoke!! Just saw the unbelievable fire in Mystic at the SEAPORT MARINA. A landmark in our small town.



Just got home from VEGAS, baby! Stayed at WYNN'S RESORT. Pretty amazing! Celebrated 25 years since the LITTLE WHITE WEDDING CHAPEL with ELVIS!

Having our biannual SIP & SHOP @ COCO'S SALON on Monday the 5th of December! Many vendors and crafters are joining us including TAMI-ANN, JOJO JOANNE HOLLY, VICKI CHAPMAN ESTY, WILLOW ROSE JEWELRY, DARLA and DARLA..twin trouble with dueling beauty products, PAMELA ROSETTA CHOCOLATES and many more! Stop in! Food and wine served freely!

ROMPER STOMPER, Baby! Hap-



py Birthday, DAD! KATHI MURPHY, RICHARD BOISCLAIR, SAMANTHA STOREY, BARBETTE PETTINI, ROCKY HARKNESS, LUCKY LEDWITH, JULIE HOLLAND, JACKIE FERRIGNO BAILEY, TAMMY SHAWN, JOHN RILEY, HEIDI HOLT SHANNON, SAM JOHNSON, STEVE CERSOSIMO, PETER STAMM, GREGG GULINO, RANDI SELVIDIO, KARRIE LAMARCHE, GEORGE TATTERSALL, CHICK SHAWN, KRIS SLOCUM, LISA KSS, SUE MENHART, JIM LUCY and TINA ELDRIDGE! HAPPY Birthday to All and to all GOOD NIGHT!

New Year's Eve is fast upon us! We are hoping to hit a couple local pubs CC O'BRIEN'S and ANGIE'S PIER 27 for some dinner and pre-gaming before

heading over to the HILTON in Mystic for WICKED PEACH at the IRONS!! Awesome way to ring in the New Year. 2023???? Can u believe it! What a long, strange trip it's been.

Random..Karaoke on Thursdays at the HANDLEBAR CAFE with CYLVER CEA, Congratulations to CHUCK and MELANIE! and Thank you for having me to perform your wedding ceremony, and JORDAN TAMBORRA and her crew as well as WAYNE BZYDLO and



his spotted at the MYSTIC HOLIDAY LIGHTED BOAT PARADE!

DANA NEUGENT and A TOWN FULL OF BLUES on Facebook always has the skinny on local Blues Events and some amazing pictures, ALAINA'S COFFEE changed to the GUAC'N ROLL TRUCK, so many Thanksgiving pictures I can not print them all, but it looks like some pretty cool Holiday



Traditions are upon us! TOMMY DEE was Rockin' It in Naples!

Well, as usual I dropped the Ball and am coming up with this article using a Wing and a Prayer.

*Happy New Year to all my favorite peeps!
See you in 2023!*



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DINING OUT

"At Home Flavors at Bayou BBQ & Grill"

By Elizabeth Saede

The funky brick and painted exterior of Bayou BBQ & Grill would be at home anywhere in the BBQ belt of the United States. Houses surround the restaurant on a New London traffic circle, and the restaurant is easy to miss at first pass. Several times a week, irresistible aromas waft from the giant roaster inviting drivers, pedestrians, and neighbors in for a bite. On Wednesday evenings, the covered front patio radiates lively New Orleans-style jazz. Musicians play fiddles, banjos, and stand-up bass until colder weather draws the party indoors.



Tin ceilings, a large wooden bar, brick wall, and New Orleans-inspired artwork infuse the interior space with vibrant colors and textures while jazz plays in the background. Cajun, Creole, BBQ, and Tex-Mex flavors pepper the menu. Seafood Filé Gumbo overflows with sautéed vegetables, okra, rich fish stock, superbly-fresh shrimp, and mild white fish. Warm spices enhance the fresh ingredients in each savory bite. A chicken and Andouille gumbo is available, but I can't imagine anything better than the

iconic soup in front of me. My brother, Tom, savors a salt-rimmed margarita while scanning the menu, but I'm happily waiting for him to catch up.

18 SOUND WAVES



With a playful wink, bartender/waitperson Jodie says she doesn't like most vegetables but adores Bayou's garlic green beans. I choose them and roasted veggies to accompany a BBQ platter of brisket, St. Louis-style spareribs, and grilled Andouille sausage. Soft, charred Brussels sprouts and buttercup squash contrast with the perfectly al dente, delicious green beans. Side choices with entrees include mashed sweet potatoes, collard greens, cheese grits, rice & beans, creole string beans, macaroni salad, side salad, and cornbread. Moist cornbread accompanies the substantial platter, and the beef brisket is smoky-tender with properly blackened seasoning bark. Slightly sweet and spicy toma-



to-based Tennessee BBQ sauce tops the tender ribs, while Andouille pops with delicious heat. Three flavors of hot sauce adorn each table for those who prefer a

sharper bite. The platter and sides are a great introduction to this fun food emporium, but I'm a "try everything" gal and will return for roasted chicken and mashed sweet potatoes. Maybe I'll try a "chimilada," Brian's famous grilled burrito served on Roja or Verde sauce and topped with pico de gallo and chipotle cream. Chicken, carnitas, taco beef, chorizo, or roasted vegetable fillings accommodate all tastes.

Jambalaya overflows with a party of ocean-fresh shrimp, Andouille sausage, and chicken in a hearty tomato sauce over rice. Perfectly cooked shrimp star in this excellent dish, and I'll return for a whole pile of them in Shrimp Creole. The luscious, creamy beans in the rice and beans represent generations of tradition that must be tasted to be believed.



watering food. Travel and food inspire the dedicated chef, which translates into daily specials. Seared Tuna Tacos, Crab Crusted Catfish, Seared Tuna Steak, Jerk Chicken, Whole Fried Red Sea Bass, and the Latin pot roast Ropa Vieja make appearances. Since I ordered from the regular on my first trip, I'll return with companions who like to share so I can enjoy some of Brian's specials. Catfish nuggets, crab cakes, shrimp, Cajun catfish, enchiladas, and slow-cooked roast beef are great reasons to take a night off. Jodie tips me off that chorizo empanadas are a home run when offered, so I'll return hungry and hopeful, knowing I'll enjoy whatever Brian offers.

Joy from Connecticut and her New York friend Delitha enjoyed their first visit to Bayou BBQ. Both ladies give Brian's food five stars with plans to return with family. On my way out the door I suggest the ladies split warm bread pudding with caramel sauce as a sweet ending for their fabulous meal. I hope they did.

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Bayou BBQ & Grill is wheelchair accessible, open Tues. – Sat. from 4-9 PM, and Brian hopes to re-open for lunch in the spring and to enclose the patio for expanded, year-round seating. He'll need help to keep up with expanded hours and appreciates all who enjoy the creativity and love in each plate of food. The hardworking chef proves that some do more for love than money, and the community is blessed to have him. Treat yourself and someone you love to flavor and fun. Catering is available to make your next dinner or event memorable.

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Giuliano
"Giuliano"

Independent Release

"Hey hey, my my, rock and roll will never die" - so said Neil Young back in 1979. Here in the present moment we still have talented artists pushing boundaries with rock music. Giuliano is a powerhouse of a musician who proudly wears his heart on his sleeve. Not only does his music shine, but his advocacy for queer lifestyles and fairness is presented in a very accessible way, bringing relatability and understanding to cultural discussions that are still cutting edge in many ways.

In Giuliano's own words, he is "always proud and grateful to celebrate and display my queerness, both personally and through my partnership, in my music, and my life. The spaces we cultivate to express our authentic selves are sacred and beautiful. We continue to fight to strengthen the safety of our spaces and our community."

This is his debut solo album in which he wrote and recorded all the parts himself, showcasing the depth of his talent and ability to execute well down to the smallest details. While it's primarily a rock album, he does a great job of peppering in other genres such as the acoustic and harmonica-laden blues number "Demons Down" and the Americana flavored "Holy Grail".

The album opens up with "Boy Next Door" that has a little bit of Guns 'N Roses flavor to it with the rhythmic lyrical cadence and tough riffing before it breaks into the grand chorus, "What ever happened to the boy next door / He used to be my friend but he don't come here anymore".

Giuliano really opens up on the guitar with the next track, "The D", a funky, sexy number with a seductive riff and punchy

rhythm. He follows up with "Joshua", a strong ballad about his partner which always gets the crowd singing along when I've seen him perform live, "Joshua / you sparkle like the morning ocean / you busted my heart wide open / and walked right in".

"Don't Pray For Me" deserves special attention. In Giuliano's own words, "I wrote 'Don't Pray For Me' after seeing countless tragedies being met with nothing but 'thoughts and prayers'. As a queer artist, issues of justice and equity are near to my heart and my music. The song was inspired by protest music of the sixties, and I arranged it with earthy, sparse instrumentation to highlight the gravity of the lyrics. I want this song to inspire people to reject the 'us vs. them' mentality, and instead realize that real love for one another takes courage and action."

If you're a fan of strong songwriting, catchy hooks and bold emotions, you really should listen to the self-titled debut by Giuliano and check out his website musicbygiuliano.com to catch some of his high-energy live shows.

- Tom Matthew
Two Ton Music



Ken Serio

"A Jazzy Yuletide"

Tripping Tree Music

I've been a Ken Serio fan since I reviewed his "Fuse Box" CD in the Feb'22 issue of Sound Waves Magazine. I was hooked on Jazz Fusion since 1973 when I heard Billy Cobham playing his Vistalite Ludwig kit with John McLaughlin and the Mahavishnu Orchestra LIVE. I was an early percussionist and guitar player back then but knew enough to know their talent was through the roof!! Respect man, Big Time Respect!!

Which brings me back to Ken Serio, not only an excellent percussionist but also has a keen eye for talent which immediately shows itself when you listen to the seasoned musicians he chooses to play with. Many of his band mates have gone on to be respected solo artists in their own right. As a matter of fact one of his guitarist from Greece, Sakis Zachariades came out with his own CD which I reviewed not long ago.

Fast forward to today, Ken Serio recently released a holiday album titled "A Jazzy Yultide" featuring amazing musicians such as Josi Davis on Vocals, Tomoko Ohno on Piano, Sinan Bakir on Guitar, Jedd Chlebowski on Bass and Ken Serio on Drums. And as far as sound quality, you immediately hear the excellent sound engineering skills. Everything about the album is very clear, and crisp as if they were playing in the same room. OK, I can hear you all saying; "Adrian, is this going to be another love-fest review for Ken Serio's latest release??" Sadly it's not. So what didn't I like?? I feel it was how the songs were arranged and a few of the song choices that weren't a good fit for this holiday genre. The album overall has a very melancholy "feel" and takes you on a roller coaster ride between tracks you like and others you don't. For the most part it didn't leave me in a holiday spirit. So let's examine. Track one "Carol Of The Bells" was an excellent song to ease the listener into a jazz fusion holiday album but the second track "Gesu Bambino" with Josi Davis on vocals had a very simple backing by the band and seemed to go on forever. To be honest I was looking forward for track two to be over. Finally, the wait was worth it because the next track "Silver Bells" was excellent where every band member had their turn to shine. The guitar playing of Bakir intertwined beautifully with keyboard player Tomoko Ohno. Unfortunately "Little Drummer Boy" went back to being melancholy and almost played as an afterthought as if the band were just going through the motions. In "Mele Kalikamaka" and "The Snowman Walking In The Air" I feel were poor song choices, Not what I was expecting on a holiday album. On track seven, "Deck The Halls" brings us back to the great Ken Serio style we all come to expect. Lively, jazzy, where Sinan Bakir on Guitar, Jedd Chlebowski on Bass truly make a good marriage. "Sleigh Ride" is an excellent jazzy montage of holiday tunes and was in typical jazz style where the musicians show the respect they have for each other, every member got to play a mini solo but what really stood out was Tomoko Ohno on Piano. I also really enjoyed "The Christmas Traffic Blues".

It was pure, smooth holiday jazz fusion

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at its best. The stand outs on this one was the amazing Ken Serio on drums and again Tomoko Ohno on Piano. "What Child Is This" was also pure perfection with the rich vocals of Josi Davis, loved every note and maybe my favorite of the album. If you close your eyes while listening, you can imagine yourself sipping champagne at a Black Tie Christmas party in one of the swanky Newport mansions while the Ken Serio Quintet is playing. Moving on to "Mystic Nor Easter", it was an unpleasant disaster, a filler at best. Nothing more than pure, unadulterated noise. Sorry Ken but what were you thinking? On the final track, "Goodnight" highlighted again the sultry, rich voice of Josi Davis. The track was slow but melodic with almost lullaby qualities, a nice way to end the album. If you are looking for the usual, quality jazz fusion Ken Serio is known for, to be honest I only liked about half the tracks on this album, however the tracks I did like, I "really" liked. Another suggestion is to play this album as jazzy background music for your next holiday soiree, I think your guests would enjoy it. To Ken Serio: Ken, would love to sit in with you and the band at your next recording, maybe I'll write an article about it. To buy Ken Serio's "A Jazzy Yultide" on Tripping Tree Music you will have to go to KenSerio.com, not available on Amazon... yet.

Until Next Time – Adrian Webb



Jeremiah Johnson

"Hi-Fi Drive By"

Ruf Records

From his website: Born and raised in St. Louis, Jeremiah Johnson blends the sounds of the south, with Mississippi River blues and a touch of country flair. Emotionally charged blues rock, powered by the common man's passion for life and all the struggles in-between. He is known for writing songs with meaning, a powerfully persuasive voice and master class musicianship. After signing a record deal with Ruf Records in March of 2018, Johnson has released three chart topping releases. www.swaves.com

Straitjacket (#6 August 2018), Heavens to Betsy (#1 April 2020), Unemployed Highly Annoyed (#4 November 2020). Combined with his previous two releases, GRIND (#8 November 2015), Blues Heart Attack (#5 August 2016); Johnson's last five releases have all been in the top 8 of the Billboard Blues Album Charts. Jeremiah Johnson is a 2022 Blues Music Award Nominee for the best blues rock album, Unemployed Highly Annoyed. Over the last four years, Johnson has toured the US and also performed nearly two hundred European shows, opening for Mike Zito and as a featured artist in the 2020 Ruf's Blues Caravan.

When I saw the latest Jeremiah Johnson, "Hi-Fi Drive By" release for review on my desk I knew that name was familiar. Sure enough when I looked through my files I found I reviewed his "Heavens To Betsy" album back in 2020. What is really strange is the same things I liked and disliked back in the 2020 review are the same likes and dislikes I found while listening to his current

album "Hi-Fi Drive By". In a nut shell, I like this very talented artist and his band But dislike the poor sound engineering where the music sounds totally flat, muffled, and drums sound like cardboard boxes. Heavens To Betsy was recorded at Hi-Low Studios in Memphis, and the Hi-Fi Drive By album was recorded at Blue Lotus Studios in St. Louis, and both albums produced by Ruf Records in Germany. Maybe the raw tracks are sent to, and mixed and mastered by Ruf Records? All I know is that both albums have that distinct muffled sound.

Why am I making an issue of the poor sound quality? Because it truly detracts from the listener enjoying the artists' music, especially when the artist is talented and backed by a great band. Spoiler alert, aside from the sound issues I love this album! First off, lets talk about the fire power behind the album. Johnson has no less than fifteen quality, seasoned musicians who contributed in the making of this album. Too many to list but one of the guest

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piano artist that stands out is Victor Wainwright whom I know from reviewing his solo album a few years back, and who is now featured as a guest performer on the first track of this album, "68 Coupe Deville". The horns, guitars, keys, backup vocals, and a driving drum beat all coming together to produce one of the best boogie woogie dance tunes I've heard in a long while. Get ready for the Sock-hop" because that's where this song takes you.

Impossible to sit still with this one folks, impossible! Moving on to the next track "Ball And Chain". For whatever reason it reminds me of Jack Black playing guitar in the movie "School Of Rock". I think there is a song in the movie that is very similar. Either way a very nice and easy going rock rendition. "Young And Blind" features the excellent harp playing of Brandon Santini as he blends with Johnsons' guitar. "Skip-pin School" is excellent ol'school Memphis Blues with great horns and Tom Maloney on guitar. "Hot Diggidy Dog", and "The Squeeze" is what you heard me describe many times as a bluesy bump & grind, so get your partner and I'll see you on the dance floor. "Hot Blooded Love" is a Latin/Rock themed Cha Cha style tune. The diversity of Johnson's music is amazing. Info Tidbit: If you don't want to mess with Bruce Lee never make fun of the Cha cha. In 1958, Bruce Lee became the Crown Colony Cha Cha dancing champion of Hong Kong. "Sweet Misery" a beautiful 12 bar blues with a touch of swing and a great horn arrangement. "Quicksand" a slower blues tune with again great horns and guitar along with a strong driving rhythm. I like how all the band members provide the backup vocals on this one like when Glenn Miller's Band played Pennsylvania 6-5000. And on the last track, "The Band" I could easily hear this tune having that Rob Thomas/Santana magic. Half way through, the song goes into a Latin Santana-like frenzy. Just add coffee and you're ready to go into high gear. In closing, I give this album a Strong Buy recommendation! All the different song genres are done to perfection, and the traditional 50's themed horn arrangements are truly a pleasure to listen to. As for Johnson's producer, Ruf Records, I only hope they realize their sound engineer department needs serious improvement. Jeremiah Johnson "Hi-Fi Drive By" available on Amazon, iTunes, and jeremiahjohnsonband.com

Until Next time – Adrian Webb



Grant Dermody *"Behind The Sun"*

The Chicago blues meet their Louisiana roots on this third collaboration of Grant Dermody and Dirk Powell, titled *Behind The Sun*. Dermody, hailing from the American Northwest, had spent years building a reputation as one of the nation's premiere blues harmonica players, marked by a devotion to Chicago-style blues. Then, a number of years ago, he began spending time at the source, in Louisiana's heartland of the blues, eventually moving there full time. During this period he began his collaboration with Dirk Powell, a musician and producer of award-winning stature. Their second album, *Diggin' In John's Backyard*, spent several months at the number one spot on the Roots Music Report Blues chart. With *Behind The Sun*, Dermody and Powell have assembled an all-Louisiana band, setting a marker for a full immersion into the roots of blues music.

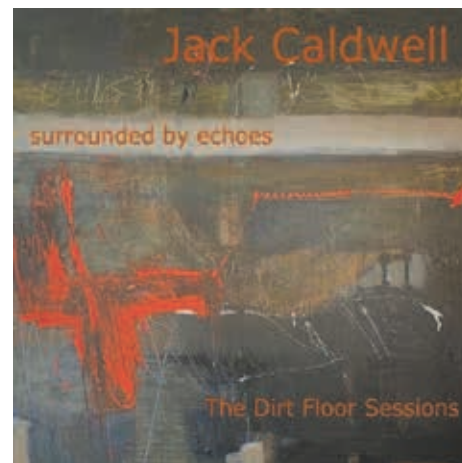
Grant Dermody and his bandmates open this fifteen track album with a New Orleans-style stomp called *Trouble No More*, then move into the fast driving *Don't Boss Me*, Lee Allen Zeno's bass providing rhythmic runs embellished by Dermody's virtuosic harp. The musician's mastery of their art is made in a statement on *Forgive Me*, a slow, bluesy vocal and harmonica piece over a hypnotic rhythm section, while Dirk Powell's guitar provides one of many sessions of backing rhythm and gripping solos. *Lost John* is a harmonica solo which allows Dermody to stretch and show off his harp playing props. Vocals, meanwhile, feature Dermody throughout the album, supported by backup and solos from Teka Briscoe and Ahyris Navarre.

The title for the album is taken from a line in the Muddy Waters song *Louisiana Blues*; "I'm goin' down to Louisiana, baby, behind the sun." Dermody plays this as a slow, bluesy number, with harmonica answering the vocal calls. *Time Ain't Due* delves into

gospel, an acapella choir with solos, singing "Tell me one time, I ain't ready, tell me one time, my work ain't through, Tell me one time, roll on steady, tell me one time, feelin' like my Time Ain't Due." The album finishes with *So Many Roads*, which opens with a nice guitar riff, moving into a slow -rolling blues number, giving the entire ensemble one last chance to show their chops.

Grant Dermody's latest album, *Behind The Sun*, joins the wide catalog of fine Louisiana blues music, worthy of inclusion in any blues fan's collection. More info may be found at www.grantdermody.com, or on Facebook at Grant.Dermody.

- Jon Persson



Jack Caldwell

"Surrounded By Echoes"

Surrounded By Echoes is the latest recording by Jack Caldwell, a veteran of folk clubs and concert halls. During his career, marked at 44 years and counting, he has performed with the likes of Suzanne Vega and Bonnie Raitt. His past releases have included co-productions with the well-regarded Colin Tilton, and self-produced albums recorded in his home studio. Then, in the months before Covid's rise, he was contacted by Eric Michael Lichter, owner of Dirt Floor Recording in the quiet, art-centric town of Chester, Ct., who wanted to produce an album with Jack Caldwell more than any other artist. It was an inquiry which led to early recording sessions, interrupted as everything was by the pandemic; and then, by the crush of artists wanting to record their lockdown backlogs of new songs. But the recording bore on, and this album is the result.

The first thing to come through, on the opening song *And I Am*, is the clear, smooth, and rather young sound of Caldwell's voice; the years have been kind, the voice cared for, one assumes. Musically, the album is not at all the folk song collection somehow suggested by the press photo of Caldwell, acoustic guitar in hand: Eric

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Lichter, among others, has supplied bass, drums, electric lead guitar, keyboards. The effect is very much a 60's and 70's soft rock sound, reminiscent by intent of Jackson Browne, John Mellencamp, and the like. Caldwell is very conscious of the lack of such music among today's offerings, despite people with the soundtrack of that era often expressing a desire for more such music.

The flip side of this is present in the song Advice, the offering of guidance to an assumedly younger person, while enduring the misplaced advice of people with no relevant experience to speak from. Sunday Over Coffee is a conversation, with harmony in the chorus, and realizations that life is not as clear cut as was the promise of younger days; but, with a resolution, and some fine, melodic guitar soloing. The song is a good fit with the soundtrack of that still prescient time. New Day moves into a prog rock sound, with synthesizer-inflected background chords and rich vocal harmonies.

This is an album which fills an untended space in the musical landscape, with nine original songs by Jack Caldwell, who offers that the songs may bring solace to the listener, and which can be sampled on one's streaming service. More production info may be found at www.dirtfloorrecording-studio.com.

- Jon Persson



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BUYING GUIDE CONTINUED

definitely go with a solid state amp. Tube amps only will add another layer of need to know information for their maintenance and care – and they cost a heck of a lot more too. If the \$200 range is more your speed and still get a new, quality instrument we will need to avoid the main stream retail stores and look at the on-line “Off” brands like “Harley Benton”, and “Fly” guitars. These two brands have been reviewed on YouTube countless times by guitar gear “influencers” like my buddy Shane from Australia and his YouTube channel “In The Blue”, and there’s the “Darrell Braun Guitar” channel from Canada and Phil McKnight from the USA. These influencers often have video segments on YouTube titled “Best Guitars Under \$200” and off brands like “Harley Benton”, and “Fly” guitars always get high marks for quality and value.

LESSONS – So, now your child has come to you expressing their wanting to learn to play an instrument, and you’ve already selected and bought the instrument... Now What? Lessons, that’s what! I am going to give you the Pros & Cons of On-line lessons, Private lessons, and Group lessons. On-line lessons - YouTube has always been a wealth of knowledge to me and my first go-to for whatever learning information I need. From bee keeping, to furnace repair, and anything in-between. Whatever you want to learn is readily available on YouTube including learning how to play any musical instrument you can think of. Also, most of the time it’s FREE. Yep, I said free. From beginner level guitar lessons to mid level and beyond. There are many teachers out there with great knowledge and experience that want to share what they know on-line. Some want to monetize their knowledge by first offering several free lessons and then you can buy a subscription that offers future lessons. The downside to this method of learning on-line is that it takes a great deal of self-imposed discipline, determination, and perseverance. Most children (and some adults) lack the maturity to stick with it. It is too easy to drift off to other distracting things on the internet or walk away from the computer all together. The upside of Private lessons - is also the downside, it’s the music teacher themselves. Just like in a friendship you have two people with personalities, likes, and dislikes. If you force a music teacher on your child and they didn’t “connect”. Your child won’t want to go to their learning session, do the assignments, or learn anything for that matter. Also, private lessons is the most costly way for anyone to learn an instrument. On the upside is that a trained music teacher will give your child the personal attention to thrive and advance, but they absolutely need to connect. A third and last alternative is enroll your child in group lessons.

Group lessons - which are like Private lessons but taught in a group instead of the one to one private lesson experience. The group should have no more than four students and the price should be approx 60% on average of what instructors charge for private lessons. I personally like the group lessons best, not only due to reduced cost but also the peer pressure will make your child want to learn, and do well.

A GIFT TO OUR READERS – As a gift to our Sound Wave readers I am making myself available to you with my direct contact information awebb@swaves.com for any questions or comments you may have. Always glad to help.

**Adrian Webb is starting his fourth year as contributing writer for Sound Waves Magazine. His experience includes product review editor for several on-line guitar gear magazines, writing product reviews and buying guides for eBay, Amazon and others. He played guitar and drums professionally in several bands, and since 2005 his hobby has been more of a collector than a player with a dozen or more buy/sell/trade musical instrument a year.



COVER STORY CONTINUED

pers we started off in the basement there. And I remember we didn't have a name for the band. We rehearsed on a Tuesday and I go up stairs and my father says "Got a name for the band yet?" "No not yet." So the following Tuesday came around and I go upstairs and he says "What did you decide to call the band?" I said "Young Neal and the Vipers." He goes (shaking his head no). I said, "Why not"? He goes, "He's not going to be young forever." (laughs) He was right. Now it's Neal and the Vipers. Really every body that came through that house. The door was always open. My mom would make a five course meal out of nothing.

Everyone was welcome there. When Franny was touring with Doyle Bramhall, one of my favorite musicians right now. Seventeen years old going on the road. He was the second guitarist with the Thunderbirds. Chuck Leavell who's played for the Stones for the past 15 years is over the house. When you guys played up at Great Woods opening up for Crosby, Stills and Nash. We're there in the back room with brother Jimmy and I said, "Look at that Daddy's talking with David Crosby over there about suppressatta (laughs) They were so engulfed in the conversation and it didn't matter who they were. My father didn't know who he was and this and that. Everybody was welcome.

It was great being in that atmosphere. We were very fortunate that Franny stuck to his guns with the music. He did pretty well with those guys.

Fran: They never got in our way. You know my father would say to me sometimes, "Fran when are you going to get a real job?" (Laughs)

Bob: They were great. My mother played chopsticks until she died.

Fran: That was a strange thing you know my niece is a classical pianist and she gives lessons and stuff and we were over at her dad's house one night having dinner and we finished dinner and I hear the piano in the other room. Oh Jen (Fran's niece) must be playing the piano. And I looked over and it was my mother. She's about 85 at the time. I'm like you play the piano? When were you going to tell me you played the piano? So there is some music hidden there.

What do you really think about so many great musicians came out of this area?

Bob: I think a big part of it is the Knickerbocker. The 70s with the Roomful playing here they were around the block on a Sunday night. I don't know for how many years. I was too young. I'm watching through the window looking at James Cotton. Howlin' Wolf and I couldn't get in.

Fran: Helen Humes and Big Joe Turner and Eddie "Cleanhead" Vincent.

Bob: When the Vipers were playing Toad's Place one night and Frannie says check out Jimmie Vaughan's brother, Stevie Ray. He's coming up to play in the area. I was playing Toad's Place I couldn't make it so I called my sister Paula go to Rum Runners Lounge in Mystic which was HoJos, Howard Johnsons. The room held about 80 people in there and she went to see the show on a Wednesday night and he comes out in a kimono with a three piece band and Paula said "My jaws still open its alike two o'clock in the morning and my jaw is still

open. Unbelievable show.

Did you have a special connection?

Fran: The special connection was really you know blues, r&b at the time which isn't quite the same as r&b now, but it was kind of a clique thing. It was a club. Certain people listened to it. It wasn't something the masses were interested in so much. It was just kind of like this music is always there and it comes to the surface every once in awhile you know. Somebody like the Stones or Clapton will come out and there will be a blues hit and then it goes back underground and people rediscover it and it comes back again. So people who are in to that genre would flock together. I mean we all knew each other. We knew who the great players were and if we got a chance to play with them we would play with them. And the same with all of them. I'm talking from Muddy on down you know. We all kind of intermingled. When they came to town we'd go down and see them, we'd sit in with them. If they didn't have a band with them you know they'd hire us. You needed a guitar player we knew the people. You know its kind of like a big club. So that kind of thing it just kind of perpetuates its little community of musicians that have connections that way. So when the T-Birds needed a drummer John knew who the right guy is for them. And when they needed a bass player we knew who the right guy was to fit in. And we weren't too far wrong I don't think. And then you've got other guys coming up like Bobby. And they're exposed to that and they can't help but get hooked on it so it grows. It just becomes part of the family and hopefully that's just how it stays alive.

I have a question about your drum style.

Fran: I'm left handed and I play a right handed drum kit (laughs)

How does that affect your style?

Fran: I'm sure it affects it some way. But there are certain things that I can't do easily because of crossing over like this (demonstrates crossing over drum move). But there are other things I can do real easy. Its very comfortable for me. The reason I did it that way is you know I'd go and see bands and 95% of them were right handed drummers. And they set up their drums a certain way. Snare, tom, floor tom, ride cymbal. And its funny because I didn't even realize it until about 2 years after I'd been playing. Somebody says "Ha! You play upside down!" (laughs) I do not! (in a stern voice).

Bob: You've got one of the best shuffles ever really.

Fran: Blame that on S.P. Leary. S.P. Leary who was Muddy Waters drummer in the sixties, he was in my band in Ann Arbor and we'd switch off. That shuffle, that double shuffle. That's the J.P. Leary Shuffle. He freaked me out and I absorbed that from him. He would play drums in the band for awhile and then he'd go up and sing and I'd play drums. Freddie Below used to come to town all the time with different people. Muddy and whoever. So I got to hear that. And they were big influences on me. And Al Jackson with Otis Redding. Gene Krupa when I was a kid. He's the one that made me want to have a big Slingerland Radio King set. I want that set of drums.

Ovation Guitar Unsung Contributors

By Adrian Webb

In 1966 Ovation guitars was the birth child of Charlie Kaman, CEO of Kaman Aerospace in Bloomfield, CT. Charlie was also a guitar enthusiast, and decided that his company could apply its technology to the age-old art of guitar making. The distinctive design that sets Ovation guitars from the rest is its round back made of a graphite substance they call Lyrachord. It can be precision-molded to any shape, entirely free of bracing or reinforcing giving their guitars superior clarity, sustain, and projection.

Soon the genie was out of the bottle and everyone wanted an Ovation guitar. Very notable performers such as Glen Campbell who became their spokesperson, and others like Josh White, Cat Stevens, Melissa Etheridge, REO Speedwagon's Kevin Cronin, and Bon Jovi's Richie Sambora to name a few loved playing them. And in my own early days of collecting guitars I had the Connecticut made Ebony 12 string Legend model. And I found the clarity, sustain, and projection that Ovation claims is absolutely true. For years Ovation was also the "darling" brand in Country music. Back in the day whenever you tuned into the

CMA Awards you would always see an artists on stage performing with an Ovation guitar.

However, just as Rome wasn't built in a day, Charlie Kaman didn't snap his fingers and create Ovation guitars all on his own. Behind the scenes stood many highly skilled and creative innovators that contributed to the final product. Although 56 years have passed since the birth of Ovation guitars I found one of the very few still alive, still living in Connecticut and willing to share what it was like being on the ground floor at Ovation Guitars, one of my family members, Lenny King. Lenny was born & raised in Norwich, went to Norwich Free Academy and joined the Marine reserves after graduating. Lenny is now in his 80's and fondly remembers working at Kaman and the Ovation guitar project.

Adrian - What was your job at KAMAN?

Lenny - I started at Kaman Aircraft (they later changed their name to Kaman Aerospace) from 10/1958 thru 4/2002. I was one of the youngest supervisors at age 19, and later they made me the Shop Supply manager which was like a hardware store for most of the products used in the manufacturing process. This gave me a detailed overview of all the parts we used to make our Kaman products.

Adrian - When did you start working on the OVATION PROJECT?

Lenny - I was known around the plant as a creative "ideas" man, a "fixer" if you will. Give me a problem and I would find a solution. Well anyway back in the very early 60's word got out that Mr. Kaman was looking for a group of "out of the box thinkers" for an all new project that no one knew any-

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thing about. We heard that Mr. Kaman hired a man named Chuck McDoner as an acoustical engineer, and some of us saw blue prints for a revolutionary new type of guitar. Now the cat was out of the bag... A guitar division was starting at Kaman. Ron Thompson a manufacturing supervisor, good friend and colleague at Kaman became an Ovation supervisor in the early days and he suggested to add me to the team as sort of a research aid using my contacts/skills/experience to find products to use in the manufacturing process of this new guitar Mr. Kaman wanted to build. We had worked together years earlier on Aerospace issues/problems and de-



veloped a lifelong bond. I had no experience in anything musical at the time but quickly learned. Eventually, I was known as the go-to guy to help come up with solutions over a broad range of issues. They had me contacting master guitar makers in Japan, and France. I also helped with creating new methods to better stabilize the guitar neck by impregnating a fiberglass compound into the wood and another issue I worked on was improving the bonding of the Sitka Spruce top to the graphite bowl. The first Ovation guitar project that I

personally played a major role in was a custom guitar we built for Cat Stevens that was earmarked for his concert in Australia. He sent in a sample of the color he wanted and asked us to match it. The problem was that we couldn't find a paint that would bond to the graphite bowl. Keep in mind this was many years before the high-tech paints available today, but I knew of a paint formula we were using in our aerospace division on the Grumman F-14 Tomcat. I called the paint manufacturer and spoke to the lead chemist about adjusting the formula to make the paint we needed for Cat's guitar. It was a perfect match to the sample and it came out a beautiful brown color with a great finish. This is also the first Ovation we used high end woods like Sitka Spruce from Alaska. Anyway, to make sure we got the guitar there in time for the Cat Stevens Australia concert safely, we booked a flight to Australia and gave the guitar its own seat! The custom guitar came out so nice it was also used in many of Ovation marketing ads. Overall Mr. Kaman was very happy with our design and the high quality construction of the Ovation guitars. Sadly, in 2008, three years before Mr. Kaman passed away he sold Kaman Musical Instruments (Ovation) to Fender guitars. I will always cherish being part of Ovation's glory days made right here in Connecticut.

Info Tidbit: Al Di Meola, an American guitarist, known for his works in jazz fusion was so impressed with Cat Stevens custom Ovation guitar that he had Ovation make one for him as well with same custom brown color round back that Lenny created for Cat Stevens. In closing Lenny, you've been a treasure trove of great information on one of the icon guitars of today, Thank You for sharing your story!

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Ken is the award winning author of The Code Name Series of books. The series is based on his father's experiences behind enemy lines in World War II. He has won awards in the Readers' Favorite contest, The NABE Pinnacle Awards in Military Fiction, and Hollywood, Paris, and New York Book Festivals.

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SUNDAY, 03.12.23 | 3 PM

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