

The Road to Reopening: How are local music venues going to handle Phase III?

This pandemic has taken a massive toll on the entertainment industry, and it's one that might be insurmountable for small clubs. On a national level, the newly formed National Independent Venue Association (NIVA) revealed that "90% of independent venues report that if the shutdown lasts six months and there's no federal assistance, they will never reopen again." On June 18, NIVA released a letter signed by a who's who of musicians calling for financial relief from Congress.

Here in Little Rhody, there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon. As I was beginning to put this column together, Governor Raimondo announced in a press conference that indoor public spaces will be able to open with 66% capacity in Phase III of reopening. She was asked whether the indoor openings will include establishments with live music.

Commerce Secretary Stefan Pryor answered in the affirmative, noting that performers will be required to be 14 feet from the audience, with musicians also spaced apart. He went on to say that venues will be required to come up with an approved plan, and that specific guidance for music venues will be released in the coming weeks. The governor has since announced that for free-flowing venues, like music venues, one person per 100 square feet is allowed.

But there remain many unknowns. Much of RI's live music was silenced in March when entertainment licenses were pulled by the city of Providence, so it's unclear how city regulations will jive with the statewide rules. And furthermore, is it worthwhile for small clubs to book shows at reduced capacities?

I talked to three local venues about their plans for the near future. Noah Donnelly of Nick-A-Nee's cited an executive order from the City of Providence on June 18 that says nothing about lifting the live music ban, so they're holding out on hosting music for more clarification on the rules.

As far as operational changes going forward, Donnelly "assumes it will be the same as it was prior" if music is allowed in Providence. He added, "We are going day by day. There does not seem to be a real plan for the arts, and that is very disappointing."

In an effort to play it safe, The Parlour is also waiting it out. Gregory Rourke said that "with limited space and no outdoor seating, it's impossible for us to socially distance effectively," and that "the risk outweighs the reward." He said they will be starting take-out food service after July 4.

Rourke's concerns point to the element that may be the toughest for these neighborhood spots. For most patrons, it's not about just the live music; it's about getting together with friends at a bar for talking, drinking and general merriment. Implementing this new normal with social distancing is going to be a tall order.

Local musician Mark Lambert organized a wildly successful fundraiser to benefit The Parlour; it raised more than \$8,000 after an initial goal of just \$2,000. Rourke said without that, they would've closed for good. "This has been an incredibly hard time for many," Rourke added. "The music/entertainment field has suffered greatly, and it's been amazing to see so much love and support in the community."

When I heard from Danielle Tellier of Dusk, they were in the beginning phases of formulating a Phase III reopening plan. They're hoping to start off with limited live acoustic acts and DJs, with both indoor and outdoor seating.

Dusk is taking safety seriously, with plans to implement measures like "a designated ordering station, Plexi partitions, ample space between tables both indoor and out, mask requirements when ordering/going to the restrooms, disposable everything and available sanitizer."

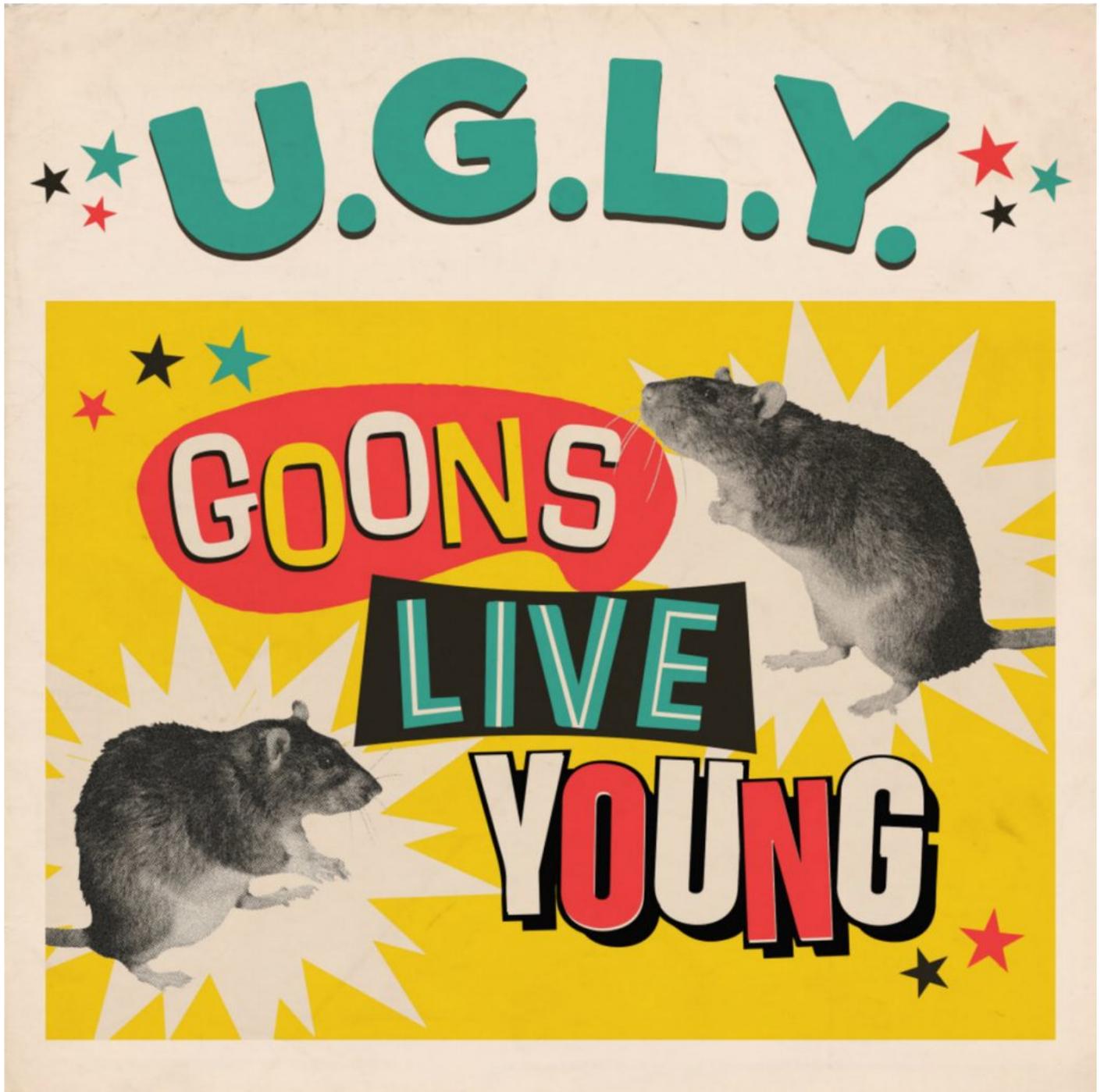
Teller also realizes the constraints. "Our largest hurdle is that our floor space is not set up for social distance with most live music, so providing entertainment, not only to draw in customers but to continue to support our music community, will be challenging," she said. "We hope to survive as a bar and start integrating our musical format as time, law and safety allow."

Dusk will be updating their Facebook page regularly as their plans take shape.

None of the three clubs received any state or federal assistance; Nick-A-Nee's didn't apply because of "limited payroll and the lack of transparency in the PPP," while The Parlour did apply for grants and loans but received no aid.

Like most small businesses during this time, your local venues need your help as they try to reopen. Hopefully, imagining your favorite venues shuttered gives you more than enough motivation. Yes, things will be different, but after more than three months with no live music, I'm certainly excited to give it a try.

The Music Plays On: Check out some tunes that'll ease you into phase 2



Here we are, once again. I won't pile on to the hundreds of commercials that begin with "In these times of uncertainty," and offer some vague message of togetherness. Suffice to say I hope everybody is staying safe and sane.

U.G.L.Y – *Goons Live Young*

U.G.L.Y: This Providence band ain't got no alibi, but they do have a pretty kick-ass debut record. Like a manic movie montage, *Goons Live Young* brings together the frantic pop-punk energy of the Vandals with the glamour of Panic at the Disco. They manage to put their own spin on the music of the early-aughts rock, and the results are impressive.

This album sounds like a major label quality recording, plenty heavy but goes down smooth like a crisp pilsner. "Space Heater" is the most obvious single, with an addictive hook and a George Costanza sample. "Regret Juice" nimbly takes on the perils of addiction ("Red wine's not gonna drown your demons/it's just gonna water them down/one day you'll be the one to drown").

It's clear that U.G.L.Y have their chops together; there's excellent drumming and wiry riffs, as well as the occasional off-time, stuttering rhythm, showing a slight math rock influence. Their Bandcamp page had no info regarding the names of the reclusive band members, though I did no follow-up research, preferring to assume the drummer is named "J.D. Rage" or something cool like that.

Things do get political, with undertones of nuclear war in the revved-up "Honey, I 8 The Microwave," and the brutal feminist anthem "Kill Your Local Cat Caller" (slice, gut and grind him).

"Minnesota" is another captivating one about getting away, and "Get Mad" is a rap-metal tune along the lines of Sum 41.

U.G.L.Y were nowhere on my radar, but this auspicious start should get them some attention.

Check out *Goons Live Young*.

Dan Blakeslee — *Lincoln Street Roughs* (Reissue)

One upside to the pandemic is the unearthing of once-buried art and music. Providence songwriter Dan Blakeslee's *Lincoln Street Roughs* was released in 2007, but was lost after the original label, Peapod Recordings in Portland, ME, folded. He re-released the eight-song album last month, and it's deserving of a listen.

Blakeslee's brand of pastoral folk is a good relaxing agent during anxious times. The album relies on acoustic instruments — fiddle, cello and others — which make it sound like a sort of impromptu live session. A highlight is some tremendous flugelhorn in "Dear Ladies Of The Night," as well as the fiddle in "Your Spanish Scarf."

Though many of the songs have a standard folk feel, *Lincoln Street* mixes it up enough to stay refreshing, from the swampy blues "He Cannot Take Me" to the waltz "Carrie," which features the great line "I'll get the strength to stand up/if you don't put me down first."

Purchase *Lincoln Street Roughs* [here](#).

Podcast Pandemonium

If you're looking to kill some time, I hear that podcasts are the wave of the future.

Where the Living Room Used To Be

Host and creator James Toomey is just over a year into the WTLRUTB podcast, which boasts a diverse back catalog of notable local music foks, including Roz Raskin, Rich Lupo, Jen Long, Paul Dube, Keith Munslow and more.

With crisp production and effective promotion, the podcast explores how these artists got started and what they've learned along the way. Toomey's laid-back demeanor leads to long-form interviews that

reveal fascinating nuggets of wisdom.

Check out the WTLRUTB podcast [here](#) or wherever you get podcasts.

It's Only Rock And Roll

The new kid on the podcast block is a veteran of the Providence music scene. Don DiMuccio, drummer of the longtime act Black & White Band, recently launched a podcast that's managed to pull in some notable guests in only two episodes.

The first episode has Gary Gramolini and Michael "Tunes" Antunes from Beaver Brown Band, while episode two features big-time British Invasion producer Shel Talmy, whose resume includes early Kinks ("You Really Got Me"), Who ("My Generation") and Cat Stevens. Talmy speaks about the volatile relations between the Davies brothers and working with Keith Moon.

A refreshing voice, Dimuccio approaches the interviews as an experienced performer and unabashed music nerd.

It's Only Rock And Roll is available [here](#).

The RI Repository

To celebrate the area's fertile musical history (and frankly because there are no shows), I'm beginning a possibly-recurring segment that looks at notable, Rhode Island-sourced records.

Velvet Crush — *Teenage Symphonies to God*

Power pop is a nebulous term used primarily by journalists, but is generally agreed to fall somewhere between the Who, Big Star and Fountains of Wayne. A classic example of the genre was birthed right here; Velvet Crush's sophomore effort, *Teenage Symphonies to God* is a masterful mix of hard rock and '60s jangle with some country rock thrown in for good measure.

Paul Chastain (vocals/bass), Jeffrey Underhill (guitar) and Ric Menck (drums) formed Velvet Crush in Providence in 1989 after Chastain and Menck relocated here after playing in multiple acts in Chicago. *Teenage* was released by Sony records in the US, and the band spent a few years following as the backup band for Stephen Duffy.

From the big intro chords of opener "Hold Me Up," you know you're in for a treat. It's an unpretentious sound born of overdriven amps and some chunky classic rock riffs, and there's no deep dive required to find the delicious hooks. Track 2, "My Blank Pages," is another stunner in the same vein.

From there, they break out the pedal steel and strings for the twangy "Why Not Your Baby," a cover of country-rock duo Dillard & Clark (Gene Clark of the Byrds). Further on, "Keep On Lingerin' On" sounds like it could be straight out of *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*.

The warm production is the work of Mitch Easter, known for producing R.E.M. in the early '80s. "Faster Days" is another country-rock one with a Tom Petty Vibe, which contrasts well with the punk "This Life Is Killing Me." The cherry on top of the power pop cake is a raucous cover of Matthew Sweet's "Something's Gotta Give."

A Late Night with Conan O'Brien appearance during the same year was the height of media exposure, but the band continued to release albums into the mid-2000s, and reunited last year with the original lineup for a string of New England shows.

Everybody knows of a band that should've been huge, but I feel that it strongly applies here. The album really holds up, and the songs have an enduring quality; good songwriting never goes out of style.

Check it out on Spotify.

Put Down Those Chips: Snack on these biscuits instead

Keep on Movin' is a good message during this trying time, and unfortunately it may have to be heeded for a long time. As I write this intro, the Newport Folk and Jazz Festivals have just been officially cancelled; I guess that one seemed inevitable, but I'm really hoping that our local venues will be able to operate in some way. A summer without live music? Lame. It would be a hit to our enjoyment, but way more importantly, a huge blow for the musicians and venue owners that make this their living.

If you're spending your days trying not to snack uncontrollably in between binging the news like I am, we've got some new music to help you pass the time, and hopefully not let the madness overtake you.

Lazertüth — *Leon*

New Bedford prog rockers Lazertüth have a new record, *Leon*, that delves into sci-fi themes on a bed of synth-driven hard rock. With album-long songs, complex time signatures and tales of the fantastical, the genre is totally indulgent by nature, but with a great capacity for storytelling and possibilities for musical innovation.

Inside the prog pantheon, Lazertüth's subject matter sticks to hard-edged interplanetary battles rather than woodland folklore. The 11-plus minute first track, "White Hot Chariot," takes elements of Rush and Yes, and tells us: "The end is near/battlefields of red/countless heads will roll." How's that for an opener? Just when you think you've found your bearings, one movement bleeds into another, which can be dizzying.

The production and the performances have the juice for an epic soundscape, but it's hard to feel the full concept with *Leon*. "Of The Same Design Part I" begins with a slogging groove and that classic prog mellotron sound, and features lines like "Saw the Sun split in half/ in a dreamscape for two." But what follows is a bunch of random clanging noises followed by some decadent synth noodling, both of which total four and a half minutes.

Maybe it's a lack of imagination or my internet-era short attention span, but I'm not sure it moves the story forward. It's times like these when I think, "Where am I? Get me back to three-and-a-half minute singles!"

“Of The Same Design Part II” gets things started with a hardcore shuffle with some cool drumming and epic electro-arpeggios, then sprawls into a lot more jamming over repetitive riffs.

Everything they are going for coalesces in “The Rider,” the pick of the litter. To me, it’s the kind of prog you want: the whimsy of Jethro Tull mixed with the crunchy riffs of The Sword. The song begins with a chimey, 12-string classical guitar intro and builds into a pleasantly irregular rocker.

And then, the second it ends, it’s all a complete blur — what did I just listen to again?

Leon is set to release on America’s birthday, July 4.

Sprues and Runners — *Trips to the Caribbean*

Sprues and Runners is a Providence-based emo band that just put out *Trips to the Caribbean* — a very well-rounded effort that shows a lot of maturity. When I think of emo, it’s usually some sort of build-up with noisy guitar, and the vocals eventually exploding into a full-throated confession. *Trips* Doesn’t completely shirk genre conventions — it will give you the yelling — but they manage to blaze their own trail through the constraints.

Having grown up a prententious twit during emo’s peak, I always dismissed it as a lot of boo-hoing, but I can now appreciate the great songwriting behind that boo-hoing. S&R has the kind of craftsmanship that brought so many people into the fold back then.

Trips to the Caribbean boasts catchy arrangement build-ups throughout. The album’s opener, “Glitch,” fits these great, jagged guitar riffs together à la Built to Spill. “The Opening” is a good example of the jangly but acerbic guitar sound throughout the record and it has super-powerful guitar harmonies at the bridge.

“Red Teeth” has a loose jammy feel, eventually revealing a charged-up punk outro and some powerful imagery about something sneaking up on you: “I didn’t see the red until it was halfway up my teeth.”

In general, Sprues and Runners have a real way with lyrics, like conveying the feeling of general restlessness with your place in the world in *Trips*. “A hive that’s grown tired of its own honey/A buzz, a constant drone/the incessant taste of money.” The song has the best moment of the album, a huge refrain that really connects: “I’m looking for a place to rest my head/I’m looking for a place to start again.” And the metaphor in “Cactus” about “harvesting root rot” is downright literary.

Trips to the Caribbean is a high-reaching record that is definitely worth a listen.

The album can be purchased at:

<https://spruesandranners.bandcamp.com/album/trips-to-the-caribbean>

Hidden Place: Songs Inspired by the Paintings of Maggie Siegel

Unfortunately, COVID-19 hasn’t meant a stop to the hard times that many were already going through. Maggie Siegel is a local painter who was diagnosed with brain cancer last year. Local musicians recently interpreted her paintings through song, and the proceeds from the release are going toward her medical bills. This very cool project includes Dan Blakeslee, John Faraone, Anthony Savino, Courtney Swain and Dylan Harley.

Buy the album or donate to the fundraiser.

And from the Depths of Bandcamp:

Modern Solutions is a page that features a bunch of old school audio from what I would guess are local TV news and local access intro and credits music, describing itself as “an ode to morning television, the sounds of meaningless information and the mundane moments of childhood.” Thank you to whoever you are; there’s something about the warble of a worn-out VHS tape that brings me back to simpler times.

COVID-19 Relief

And finally this month, I thought it would be good to share some ways to support our local artists and venues. Pre-buying the beers you will inevitably buy when this is all over is a good way to lend a hand.

Relief Funds

- The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA) Artist Relief Fund
- Newport Festivals Musician Relief Fund

Support Local Venues:

- Buy an Askew gift card
- Buy a Narrows Center gift card
- Buy a Galactic Theater gift card
- Donate to AS220

And Bandcamp will once again be waiving their fees to support artists on June 5 and July 3.

BERZERKERS: Short film featuring Brown Bird to premiere Friday



BERZERKERS, a short film premiering Friday, April 24, will feature the story of Rhode Island's Brown Bird and how their music came to serve as an inspiration for a chef 700 miles away.

Brown Bird was a folk duo featuring MorganEve Swain and her late husband, Dave Lamb. Lamb passed away from leukemia in April 2014, less than a year after he and Swain were married and the band had begun to find national success. James Rigato is the chef behind Mabel Gray, a celebrated restaurant just north of Detroit. So how does he fit in with a band from Little Rhody?

"The idea did seem like a stretch initially," said Swain. "James had emailed me with this kind of long manifesto about how much he loves Brown Bird and how it inspired his restaurant and career."

But Swain, who now plays bass in The Devil Makes Three and fronts her own group, The Huntress and the Holder of Hands, was won over. "After meeting him, it totally made sense how his passion as a music lover could inspire what he's doing at the restaurant."

Swain visited Mabel Gray (named for a Brown Bird song) while on tour. "On the restaurant walls are painted Brown Bird lyrics and a mural of a flowering cabbage with 'RIP Dave Lamb' hidden in the leaves."

A quick Google search reveals that Rigato is something of a celebrity chef, having appeared on the program "Top Chef" and involved in a bevy of online interviews. "No band or artist of any medium has influenced my creativity more than Brown Bird," Rigato said. "After more than four years of cooking at Mabel Gray, it was time I sent them this love letter."

"*BERZERKERS* was James's idea; he wanted my blessing and didn't want to do it without me, but I was definitely a little bit shy at first about having a film made about the band's story," said Swain. The film features extensive interviews with Swain and a brief history of the band, then explains how Rigato came to be a fan.

"I wanted to have that spontaneity and that freedom and just that whimsical nature, and I think that's what I pulled most from Brown Bird," Rigato says in the film. "I appreciated that spontaneity and that

pushback to conformity and I just wanted to join the party... I wanted to create in the name of.”

“Ultimately, James’s intention with the film was to meet and check in on me and let me know how much Dave’s and my love and work was still living on in someone else’s passion,” said Swain. “I think it’s a great example about how we’re all creative beings and things across mediums can speak to us for different reasons — it’s a beautiful way to connect to people.”

BERZERKERS will have its world premiere at the Freep Film Festival on Friday, April 24. Visit freepfilmfestival.com for showtimes and location(s).

Lovable: Nova One’s ambitious new release is equal parts challenging and comforting



Roz Raskin; photo credit: Shea Quinn

With clubs and concert halls shuttered, it's a difficult time for the music community, and especially for all the performers and employees left without an income. If you're looking to lend some support, perhaps the easiest thing you can do is buy some of your favorite music.

We've all accepted that music is essentially free now, but there are a lot of expenses that the .008 cents per Spotify stream doesn't cover. If you're a regular reader of this column, you've seen many links to Bandcamp albums. This time, consider kicking in a few sheckles. And when this is all over, be sure to get out to your favorite local venue for the post-pandemic blowout that will no doubt be happening.

Nova One - *lovable*

Nova One, the project of local music supernova Roz Raskin, is back with a second release, titled *lovable*. The record sees their songwriting reach new heights, and bolsters an already-impressive body of work. It's a nice mix of experimental and conventional, challenging the listener with ambitious themes on a bedrock of melodic maturity.

In 2018 Raskin's longtime band, The Rice Cakes, disbanded after a decade-long run, and the release of the E.P. *secret princess*. While The Rice Cakes were known for being experimental and cerebral, Nova One revels in unapologetic hooks that provide the listener with an innocent comfort.

Asked about their coming out as a lover of catchy melodies, Raskin said, "For many years with the Rice Cakes, I worked to flip pop on its head (which was fun as hell), but this project has given me an opportunity to be loud and proud about my love of pop music. It felt important that these songs were vocal-centric with a pad of warm, raw sound underneath."

The shimmery guitars and synths throughout give *lovable* sonic textures that remind me of artists like Jay Som and Beach House. "Feeling Ugly" is a fuzzy chamber pop tune, and "Close Encounter" is a reimagined Rice Cakes single that treads lightly over shimmery guitar chords. The Cakes drummer, Casey Belisle, also performs on three tracks.

The record's dreamlike quality is in part the work of Big Nice Studio in Lincoln, which Raskin calls "truly an incredible space" that they worked with multiple times. "Bradford Krieger and Chaimés Parker, who engineered and co-produced the album and played on several tunes, tirelessly work to make every project that comes through that studio sound the best it can."

In addition to the soundscape, the album is thematically ambitious, tackling the nature of relationships, expectations and growing apart. "This particular record felt like a big release," says Raskin. *lovable* was written while I was going through a heavy breakup with an incredible person and while also feeling a need to be more vocal about my queerness and non-binary identity."

"Somebody" is about the predictability of domesticated love, stating, "I don't want to be everything you need." The surreal, midtempo beauty "violet dreams" deals with how desires are sometimes put off for the sake of others, and the raw emotion and imagery of "let's party" addresses anesthetizing yourself in the face of sadness.

The standout for me is the album's title track, which has it all: simple guitar leads, a devastating hook, and a compelling bridge build-up. It asks the poignant question that all sentient beings ponder at some

point in their time on this mortal coil: “Am I lovable?” It’s straight-up radio hit pop perfection, and a song I hit repeat on way more than was necessary to write this article.

When asked how they’re dealing with these times of uncertainty, Raskin says, “Communication is key for me right now. I think putting in effort to stay in touch with our communities the best we can is super important right now so folks don’t feel isolated.”

And their suggestions for supporting the creative community during this time? “Buy merch online, support Patreon pages, tune into live streams, leave loving comments on social media, share your musician friends’ works.”

Lovable releases April 24 on Community Records, and can be purchased at: novaonenovaone.bandcamp.com/album/lovable

Spring Growth: New albums and local shows kick the season off right

The Z-Boys - Elwood

Here’s (I’m assuming) a Motif exclusive: *Elwood*, the sophomore album from Newport’s The Z-Boys, hits the streets March 6. They’re a band known for their high-energy performances. With tempos and influences all over the place, it’s like a dump truck careening along the edge of a canyon road. Fans will be pleased that the new album manages to keep much of the mayhem intact.

You may be familiar with the brand of “everything overload” the Newport band pours into the cauldron, throwing in blues rock, surf, Latin, country and more. Distilling a dynamic live band into an album format can be difficult. Studio constraints have the Z-Boys a bit more restrained, but without a lot of production fluff.

“You Lie” is familiar blues rock territory about lying, cheating, etc, and “Don’t Have to Hang Around” is a folk-Mariachi tune mixed with a pleasant country vibe. “Too Slow” is a Steely Dan-like shuffle with a barrage of drum fills, and “Wanna Be Sure” features chunky, arena rock power chords. The downside with the everything-but-the-kitchen-sink method is there’s no real standout track.

Elwood has the expected guitar fireworks present in every song, along with rock solid, tasteful bass playing. The drumming is enthusiastic if not overbearing at times, like Keith Moon on Lite Rock 105.

I think the best times are when they just fuckin’ go for it full bore without bothering with a melody. “The Duel” is a six-and-a-half-minute instrumental opening with a Bohnam-like, thunder-on-the-mountaintop drum solo that builds to a rock ‘n’ Latin flavor. The hard funk of “Stratus” gives us another 6-plus minute rager.

With *Elwood*, The Z-Boys show that they are unapologetically all in. But to me, it’s still essentially a live

experience, so it's time to get out to a show if you like what you hear.

The Z-Boys will celebrate Elwood's release at Dusk on Mar 6 along with Tall Teenagers and Jesse the Tree. 9pm. Find Elwood at: thezboys.bandcamp.com

Lazy Magnet — Mahogany

Local music journeyman Jeremy Harris and his Lazy Magnet project is back with the atmospheric *Mahogany*, being celebrated with a vinyl release show at the Columbus March 10. You may remember his recent shoegaze project from a previous column. His newest effort puts forward his own brand of shadowy jazz standards.

Harris brings a singular, sweeping vision to each project. "Seahorse" and "Shade For" have a haunting quality that surrounds the swaying saxophone, vibraphone and the occasional classy cymbal swirl. But *Mahogany* goes beyond the low-lighting noir sound. "The Air You Breathe Is" has an appealing synth-pop minimalism with a great vocal performance and hook but repeats at length. "Hopeless Feeling" is a rocking blast of fuzz and guitars.

Mahogany isn't for the faint of heart or short of attention. The album unfolds into something out of a black and white foreign film soundtrack, but the plodding and slow tempos sometimes make it easy to lose focus.

Lazy Magnet is holding the Mahogany vinyl release show upstairs at the Columbus Theater on Mar 14 with Clay Camero. 9pm. Find Mahogany at: lazymagnet.bandcamp.com/album/mahogany-2019

Local Music Rundown

Sure it's great to go see Brit Floyd (March 10) or Against Me! (March 13), but let's stick to our roots. Here are some local (and local-ish) acts to catch:

Triangle Forest; Isadora's 93 Club; Friday, March 6: A mysterious new venue in Olneyville appears out of the fog — the perfect place to take in the catchy synth pop of Triangle Forest. What does 93 refer to? Are there any other acts on the bill? The suspense is palpable.

Will Orchard/Myles Bullen/Dylan Lucas; Askew; Saturday, March 14: Will Orchard, the songwriter formerly known as LittleBoyBigHeadOnBike, joins a bill with The Horse-Eyed Men's Dylan Harley and rapper Myles Bullen. Come get some fried chicken on a stick.

Varsity Club/ Well Wisher/ H.R. In Clover/Stereoflower; Dusk; Sunday, March 22: Sunday night is a time to get ready for the week, but why not get ready to rock instead? Dusk, located in the industrial hinterlands of the capital city, hosts a night of alt rock bands brought to you by Top 5 Fiend.

Rick from Pile (solo), Mountainess, TBA; AS220; Wednesday, March 25: Originating in Beantown, Pile has amassed an impressive following on the strength of their dreary, post-punk noise.

Ski Bunny/Viking Jesus/My Mother/Ghosts in the Snow; Parlour; Saturday, March 28: Parlour regulars Viking Jesus anchors a solid night of music. And the music's not all — this show is your chance to check out the Parlour's classy new stage sign.

Sometimes an Ear Is Just an Ear: Baylies Band releases Freudian Ears

Baylies Band - *Freudian Ears*

Baylies Band is back with *Freudian Ears*, a new LP released late last year. A long-running local favorite, the group is a unique combination of zany spoken word, art rock, psychedelic noodling and guitar noise. The maestro is Eric Baylies on vocals and keys, a man whose flair for experimentation and thirst for truth knows no bounds.

The group first came to my attention at the Fourth of July fest last year at Dusk, where toward the end of a rollicking set, Baylies dragged a huge A-frame ladder onto the floor, set it up, and finished the show atop it. Total rock 'n' roll.

Now entering their "26th year of international underexposure" (Baylies' words), Baylies Band's material sounds as urgent as ever and reveals truths about ... well, something or other. This iteration of the group includes members of Joy Boys, Tapestries, Throne Of Saturn and Bad Motherfucker.

Reached through the magic of email, Baylies described the themes of the album: "Mental illness and self medicating to overcome crippling depression in no uncertain terms in unsettling times," he said. "I try as best as one could, considering limitations of reality and whatnot, to colorize a black and white, paranoid, drug-induced fever dream."

"You're Fresh" has the new wave tones of The Cars and includes the memorable line, "You got your boyfriend at Savers," and "Out of the Can" is a minute-and-half of electro punk along the lines of Devo.

The eight-minute "Schizophrenic Valentine" is an indulgent, sprawling epic with spaced-out guitars and a driving groove. According to Baylies, this track is a "kind of musical bridge constructed of gold between our older Sonic Youth or Captain Beefheart influences to a more almost dance music like Sun Ra produced by Giorgio Moroder." The guitar jamming borders on overkill, but you can't knock it for lack of ambition.

So how does this all come together? "Sometimes I work with something from an improv and take it from there, and sometimes I present songs in their entirety and then the band really brings them back to life like Pinocchio on Easter," said Baylies. "Some songs tell stories with a linear secret language, others are seemingly nonsense phrases pulled together from different memories and parts of my heart."

"Fashion Mullet" is an experimental rock tune that includes a history lesson of sorts, back to the days when Baylies did have a mullet, and started legendary enterprises Eric Baylies Academy Of Dance and the Handsome Boy modeling school.

The closing track, "Rainbows," features The Legendary Rich Gilbert on what I can only assume is the ripping guitar solo. The famed once-local guitarist who has played with Frank Black and Human Sexual Response, among other notable acts, agreed to play on the track after simply being asked, a fact Baylies

calls “mindblowing.”

“Maybe you’ll be in Baylies Band next year, or maybe the judge will just grant you parole,” he added.

To hear *Freudian Ears*, visit: bayliesband.bandcamp.com/album/freudian-ears

Older Brother — *Older Brother*

The promise of a debut album is always exciting, and this is a promising release indeed from Providence trio Older Brother. Before the rock ‘n’ roll lifestyle takes its hold and throws everything into a pit of despair, let’s enjoy a very focused, high-quality album that was a pleasure to listen to.

The album has a subdued lo-fi rock vibe like a Pavement for modern times. *Older Brother* has a minimalist, organic feel, with some three-note guitar leads and simple drums that give it the vibe of a spontaneous bedroom jam session. The opener, “Regain My Footing,” is probably the album’s single, and “Gulp It Down” sounds like vintage Built to Spill. “Loney”’s guitar harmonics and vocal harmonies make for a wistful, sensitive quality that doesn’t seem cheesy.

“Moving Forward” was the highlight, and the emotional resonance of “the highway always groans” line is the best thing I’ve heard in a while. Everything from the build-up, the comedown, the hi-hat flourishes and the noise of the outro make it all-around just a killer tune.

Older Brother is available at: <https://myolderbrother.bandcamp.com/album/older-brother-2>

Dylan Lucas — “Eye Took a Trip”

A shoutout to Dylan Harley for his new song “Eye Took a Trip,” in which he reimagines a psychotic break he suffered in 2012. It takes a somewhat standard folk progression and adds a kind of funky, stuttering groove on top. A kind of train track under everything and some pop-culture samples round out an intriguing song worthy of multiple listens.

Listen to “Eye Took a Trip:” open.spotify.com/track/3hCGAcMRon1t3UJ3aB5bxY?si=Vopu7sD-TrmJL4iCYOTBGQ

Long Live Rock

Though it happened a month ago, approximately 50 years in today’s news cycle, I’d like to mark the passing of Neil Peart. I’ve only ever been a casual Rush listener, but as a kid in drum lessons, it was kind of mind-blowing to learn that this guy had been playing those insane fills the exact same way since the ‘70s. I’m too lazy to grab the actual article, but *The New York Times* described his drumming as something like “very flamboyant, and ultra precise at the same time,” which is a pretty great description. RIP Neil.

Anthony Savino Does a Good Job: The artist discusses his evolution and facing the abyss

What better way to kick off the new year than discussing Anthony Savino's thoughtful, ambitious release *Good Job*, which tackles weighty topics like wealth, work and love — ideas that might have made an appearance in your resolutions for 2020.

For a decade, Savino fronted the New Bedford-based punk band Half Hearted Hero, which now plays as Dream Job. Savino's solo work takes a more straightforward approach and puts the spotlight on the lyrics. *Good Job's* unvarnished production doesn't add a lot of fluff, and the playing is subtle enough to make the songs a vehicle for Savino's rich storytelling.

"North" has a sort of bossa nova lite feel and explores the realities of growing up. "Someone Else's Dime" is a take on the enterprise that is the American desire to succeed: "One size American dream/I'm free and bored and rich on someone else's dime/I see the stores and silver circles fill my eyes."

The stripped-down "Work Harder" candidly explores what it means to build your craft as an artist while balancing the need to make money and keep the plates spinning. "Thick Line" has a country ballad vibe and talks about the powerful men called out for their behavior in this more enlightened era.

I recently spoke with Savino about the new album and his thoughts on songwriting.

Jake Bissaro (Motif): You're probably best known in punk/alternative circles for your work in Half-Hearted Hero. Was there a conscious transition to a more stripped down sound?

Anthony Savino: I've always tried to maintain involvement in both the punk and singer-songwriter worlds, so I don't really have a demarcation for either style. To me, it's all guitar-based music.

JB: Songs like "Pictures" and "Someone Else's Dime" are frank discussions on politics, and in some cases the American Dream. Do you intend on a theme for your albums?

AS: Typically no, at least not initially. I tend to just dive right in. I've done the concept album thing, but I'm mainly trying to have the song say everything it needs to say first, then look at the album and see what the bigger picture may be.

I like to think that I've always allowed myself to explore whatever topics come to mind as I understand them. For this round of songs, trying to focus my songwriting approach made certain subjects stand that before may have been more oblique.

JB: Has your songwriting approach changed over through your time playing music?

AS: I certainly hope so. I like to think I've grown and developed over the years. I've really tried to seek out songwriting resources to apply to my own work, whether it's reading materials or workshops. For a while I was involved with the Brown Arts Initiative songwriting course as a participant, then as co-facilitator. It's a weekly meetup of songwriters, people bring their work and have it critiqued by the group.

JB: Tell me about the title track, which uses some history to explore the value of work.

AS: I'm wary to talk too much about the songs, because as soon as you put something out, I see it as being in the hands of the audience. But on "Good Job" I wanted to lay out something in a direct way. There's a little sarcasm and humor in there, and some family history.

JB: What was the recording process like?

AS: As with my last album, *That Easy*, I recorded in Portland, Oregon, at my friend Ben Barnett's studio. I had been sending him demos beforehand, but pretty much just recorded for three weeks straight. I went crazy for a little bit, as one does when digging into the creative process — there's always that moment when you're facing the abyss. I had great support from his team out there, and Ben really understands songwriting, which is a huge plus.

JB: There's some great playing on the album. Any notable collaborations?

AS: A. Walker Spring sang these great harmony vocals with me on the majority of the record. And Danny Aley on keyboards added a wonderful magic layer to everything with his thoughtful playing. He's the kind of player you would show a song to once, and they come up with something incredible right off the bat.

Anthony is playing locally twice in the next few months:

Sunday, January 12 | Co-Creative Center in New Bedford, Mass | with Hayley Sabella, Seamus Galligan.

Friday, February 21 | AS220 | with Mountainess, Lindsay Foote

Hear *Good Job* at anthonysavino.bandcamp.com/album/good-job

Keep on Moving: The Technique Is No Technique: An interview with Daughters guitarist



Nicholas Sadler

You may not know that one of the era's premier industrial noise rock bands has its origins right here in PVD. Daughters formed in 2002 in the wake of grindcore band As the Sun Sets, becoming known for their unhinged live performances and aggressive touring schedule. After some band infighting, their well-received album *Daughters* was released in 2009 in the wake of a breakup. Eight years later, the reformed group released *You Won't Get What You Want*, pushing themselves musically and gaining new levels of national attention and critical success. The album was even in the running for The Needle Drop's recent "Album of the Decade" conversation.

Their music is often harsh and noisy with a dark intensity matched only by the relentlessly grating vocals and subject matter. The circular "Long Road, No Turns" has an industrial clanging over a buzzsaw guitar, and "Less Sex" brings some electronics into the mix, like a ghoulish Gary Newman. It reminds me of a slow disintegration in audio form. Not in the gaudy, Slayer, drinking blood kind of way, but rather a withering away, the soundtrack to the insidious elements that eat into your soul.

I recently spoke with Daughters guitarist Nicholas Sadler, whose textures create the macabre bedrock for Alexis S.F. Marshall's vocals. Sadler, 37, who still resides in RI, moonlights as the bassist for post-punk band Way Out, and has formerly performed with bands like Fang Island. Other local music credits include doing live sound at AS220 and managing Jam Stage in Pawtucket, and Sadler has also worked in music publishing and film scoring.

Jake Bissaro (Motif): What is your take on the scene here? Do you think this is a good place to make music or art?

Nicholas Sadler: I think we have a really cool, multi-faceted scene here, with many talented people in many different corners. Generally, the best places to start a band or play music are cities where you can live cheaply. There was quite an explosion here of great music and art for a long time — it seems less like that now, but I'd say still definitely a viable option, especially compared to place like New York.

JB: Talk about the process of putting *You Won't Get What You Want* together.

NS: Because we're spread out (our drummer lives in Austin and our singer lives in Pennsylvania), it was a lengthy process. The album started with me working on it when I had time in between other projects. I'd come up with shapes and ideas for songs and share them with the band via Dropbox, which had well over 100 tracks at one point. Everyone listened in to figure out what they like and don't like, and we settled on the ones everyone thought would work best for a record.

JB: How was recording at Machines with Magnets?

NS: We've made almost all our records with them, and love working there. This area is lucky to have a place for such high-quality recording and talented engineers [Keith Souza and Seth Manchester]. The biggest advantage is that they're not trying to force anything on you, and will let you try out your weird ideas. In studios, you often have no wiggle room, and end up fighting with someone you've never met who wants to put their stamp on music you've spent years working on. With the kind of work they're doing, I think they're setting themselves up to be legendary in that space.

JB: Do any of the tracks in particular stand out to you?

NS: I'm particularly proud of "Satan in the Wait," which sounds much darker than it actually is. We tried to step outside of the box on that one; no instrument overplaying, and there's plenty of space, and a lot of repetition without becoming boring. I've always loved film scores and minimalism, so I'm really happy with that one.

JB: A lot of great guitar tones build the foundation for these songs. Is there a particular way that you shaped your sound?

NS: There's no specific road map I use, but I've always found it helpful to force myself to do something I'm uncomfortable with. When I first got into guitar, the sounds I liked were seedy and weird, not something you could learn at the local store, so I had to figure it out myself. In a way, not having any technique became the technique.

JB: Was there any strategy to building an audience like Daughters has?

NS: I think making your band stick is part intent and part right time, right place. People take for granted that there are tons of factors in play that you can't control. Our first record came out with a lot of hype, and we were in *Rolling Stone* and all of that. The second record took some chances and effectively buried the band for a while, and I have zero explanation for why the new record has taken off as it has. I'd say the advice is to basically just keep going. But there is something to be said for being realistic. Like, will you still like your life if you're making music but nobody cares?

Daughters comes to the Paradise in Boston on Sat, Dec 21.

Release Madness!

Doris Duke - *Need* EP

Doris Duke is a Newport-based quartet that specializes in a mix of grunge and energetic punk rock, describing their sound as "angry music normally reserved for those half their age." The EP may not

share the ultra-refined pedigree of the namesake tobacco heiress, but it'll definitely give you the hit of rock 'n' roll you're looking for.

It's a well-rounded five tracks, changing from breakneck speeds to sludgy riffs. The opener, "Ripper" is just that, and "Debt" reminds me of the politically charged punk rock of bands like Anti-Flag. "Need" is a midtempo grunge number reminiscent of Alice in Chains. The high point is the excessively titled "(Excuse me, I don't mean to interrupt your dinner, but you so look like my friend) Shaniqua" for its deft stop/start timing and Descendants-like catchy hooks.

Need is available at dorisduke.bandcamp.com

Carinae — *Carinae*

A shoutout to my old bandmate Kasey Greene and his band Carine, which is out of Hadley, Mass, and recently out with their excellent self-titled LP. They take the swirling, vintage sounds of psychedelia and mix in an indie rock sensibility. Lose/Find yourself in the spacey keyboards and waves of delay in tunes like "Making Breakfast" and "Bread Mansion." The epic "eta/Someday" has a powerful slow groove that builds into a some plain old rockin' out. The catchy, playful tune Of Montreal-like "Honey Money" is the best for my money, but it's hard to go wrong with any track on here.

Find the album at carinaeband.bandcamp.com/album/carinae

Chris Capaldi — *Frequency EP*

Chris Capaldi is out with *Frequency*, the follow up to 2018's *Far from Here*. Capaldi is an excellent songwriter who can really wail on the guitar. The songs are very impassioned (sometimes overly so) and bring an element of heartland rock.

"Thin White Line" is a straight-ahead, Petty-like radio rock song and "Make it Out" is a smooth ballad. The arrangements are tight throughout, with tasteful backing vocals from Catie Flynn. Capaldi shows off his writing chops in subtle ways; the compressed funk of "Too Late" includes a refreshing post-chorus breakdown. There's always something intriguing to unpack in his music.

Find Chris Capaldi's music at:

open.spotify.com/album/5YTe9CbZpjgfROwknt4EqK?si=EYKsn4c8TC6p0kcQYcZx-Q

Last but not least, there's a great show happening as part of the **Route 44 Music Series** at the Harmony Lodge. On Thursday, Dec 5, Smithfield natives Sarah Potenza and Ian Crossman return for an intimate performance. Opening the show will be Sean Finnerty-Robcats, Biscuit City and Forever Young.

Keep on Moving: Howling: New albums and

spooky shows

Christians & Lions – Young Familiar

Christians & Lions, a self-described “New England DIY dreamfolk collective,” is out with the album *Young Familiar*, the group’s first release after a 10-year gap, and the album is nothing short of spectacular.

Frontman Ben Potrykus led indie rock outfit Bent Shapes in the ‘10s, and founded screamo band Receiving End of Sirens in the ‘00s, among other projects. Compared to these bands, *Young Familiar* seems to draw on the unfamiliar; Potrykus is apparently one of these enviable characters who can thrive in all styles of music.

The playing, melodies and songwriting are all very high quality, with the occasional orchestral swell that elevates the album. The horns and harmonies of “The Swailing” reminds me of Calexico, and features evocative, stirring lyrics: “Holy ghoster of raw decryptor/roots, stalks and leaves feed family trees in Warsaw with blood memories and faith.”

The album keeps its roots in fairly well-worn templates, but goes in different directions. C&R moves from edgy folk-rock (“Tell the Keeper”), to ethereal, pseudo-Bright Eyes (“Professional Medium”) to more traditional fingerpicking (“Lucky Ghost”).

On the experimental side, “Is To As Are To” reminds me of the Barr Brothers mixed with Nick Drake, and “Palekh” is a kind of gypsy ska in the vein of Camper Van Beethoven. This album shows the decade of growth, and explores many different areas in a way that is never hacky or novelty. C&R is that side project that ends up being as good as anything you’ve ever done.

Check out Young Familiar at: christiansandlions.bandcamp.com/album/young-familiar

Letters to Jenny – *Glitter and Gore*

Glitter and Gore is the second release from Cranston’s Letters to Jenny. This EP harkens back the days of radio-friendly alternative metal and hard rock in the early 2000s. Their sound keeps the fuzz pedals fully engaged, but maintains a certain studio slickness; *Glitter and Gore* is a fairly apt description.

Singer Alyssa Martineau’s vocals reminds me of Amy Lee mixed with Hayley Williams. Songs like “Monster (Make Me the Villain),” with the line “I’m your sweet disaster” seem a bit one-dimensional and a rehashing of the alt-rock era. “Play Nice” is along similar lines, but with some killer drum fills — big ups to drummer Chris “Fraggle” Rossi.

For my money, Letters to Jenny hit their stride when going outside the drama of the nu-metal chassis into more upbeat territory. “You Could Be The One” is my personal favorite, a hard-edged romance with an almost bubble gum element to it. “Bore Me to Death” is solid pop-punk a la New Found Glory that takes me back to my youth.

Check out Glitter and Gore at letterstojenny.bandcamp.com/album/glitter-and-gore

Doctor Gasp - An M.D. in Fright

Every year around this time, Doctor Gasp invades the body of accomplished songwriter Dan Blakeslee, and brings his roots-tinged horror-themed music to the New England masses. Since 2005, the Doctor has been petrifying audiences with his performances, complete with costumes and occasionally a full band (The Eecks).

Gaspeads (as I assume the hardcore fans are called) were treated this month to a new release from the archives, *At The Abandoned Woodshop*, which includes tracks like “Teeth Of Candycorn” and “She, Vampire Tamer” that was recorded back in 2008. Gasp’s sound recalls influences of ragtime and old-time jazz and is a heightened, more dramatic version of Blakeslee’s music. The area’s premier Halloween-based entertainer is certainly something to see.

Doctor Gasp has a show at the Columbus Theatre on Saturday, October 26 along with **Vudu Sister’s Keith McCurdy** (spooky) and Boston’s punk surf band **Beware The Dangers Of A Ghost Scorpion** (extra spooky).

For Dr. Gasp’s full tour dates, visit: doctorgasp.com

Other shows that will give you a fright (or are at least labelled “Halloween” on the internet) include:

Two-part Hammer Halloween Fest at Alchemy: Oct 25 — The Fairview, Familiar Spaces, In Good Nature & more; Oct 26 — Bicycle Inn, Eleanor and the Pretty Things; Square Loop

A Big Lebowski Halloween! at Askew feat. an unclear relation to the film, and performances by Noble Dust, Charlie Marie, and The Wolff Sisters on Oct 25

Courthouse Center for the Arts’ 5th Annual Halloween Gala feat. James Montgomery on Oct 25

Ocean Mist’s Halloween Bash 2019 feat. Nate Bash Band on Oct 26

Nick-A-Nees’s Spooky Shindig Halloween Party with Becky Lynn Blanca & Friends on Oct 31

ASKEW’S 2nd Annual Halloween Show feat. Toad and the Stooligans, Bochek, and Badword\$, and a costume contest with prizes on Oct 31

Fete’s Devil’s Feedback Halloween Party with Fathom Farewell, In The Red, Lusus, Firsbourne, American Grim, Silver City Gents on Nov 1

And finally, a funny tidbit from an 83-year-old former rock ‘n’ roll accountant. Laurence Myers, accountant to bands like Bowie and Rod Stewart, is out with a new tell-all, and reported that Mick Jagger said at the time, “I’m not going to be singing rock & roll when I’m 60.” Things did not exactly go as planned for Jagger, who now has a 2-year-old child with a dancer less than half his age.

It’s good to see the accountants getting a piece of the pie; if you think about it, maybe they’re the unsung heroes. I have to think these bands wouldn’t have the stability to throw TVs out hotel windows if there wasn’t competent money management happening behind the scenes.