

## [The Buzz: Musicians discuss how they've weathered the pandemic](#)

Okee dokee folks... Two months ago when the virus cases started to increase and all hell broke loose, I asked a few local musicians how they were navigating the pandemic and included this in my column in early March. I checked back in with all those musicians the other day to see how they were managing. I asked if they had been able to collect unemployment, gotten a stimulus check, made any income from live streams or online sales, and if they had been livestreaming and what was that like. I also wondered if they had been creative and writing new material. Most importantly, I asked what they think the future holds for us as performers. You all pretty know what I think, I mentioned in last the issue. I won't go there again, it's too depressing for me. As I did before, I am posting their entire responses to my query so you know exactly how things are. I know this is long but like I said before, "What else have you got to do?" Read on...

Singer-songwriter-guitarist Betsy Listenfelt says, "I have been able to finally collect unemployment, but it was only available toward the end of April. It helps, but I'm not sure how long that's going to last. Just hoping that things will get back into swing before that runs out. As for now, it is kind of impossible to book gigs for the future because restaurants are trying to open by the new rules and not even sure when they will even be able to have music again. So for now I livestream once a week and sometimes get gifts which helps, otherwise I live day to day waiting and watching for change. [betsyl.com](https://betsyl.com)

All Star Band of All Stars Band leader, David Tessier told me, "I've been without work for two months and I have to admit it's been a blessing to spend time with my kids. Musically, I've done some online collaboration with the guys in the band, written/arranged some stuff for the next album, restored my old Hammond organ into playing condition again and spent a lot of time just practicing. I haven't been too interested in live streaming because we (the All-Star Stars) have plenty of live videos out there, but I've had fun putting out what I call my 'robe series,' which is just me doing some solo covers from the '70s on Facebook. I absolutely miss performing live, but even more so I miss playing with the other musicians in the All-Stars. This has been a good time to re-energize and reassess priorities, that said, I'm ready to get back to live shows." [facebook.com/dtessier1](https://facebook.com/dtessier1)

Massachusetts blues guitarist and instrumentalist Ryan Lee Crosby replied, "I have kept busy teaching both individual and group guitar lessons on Zoom, livestreaming once a week for tips (and donating proceeds to blues musicians in Mississippi) and I am just about to launch a Patreon Page at [patreon.com/ryanleecrosby](https://patreon.com/ryanleecrosby). I've also been recording demos of new songs remotely with my bandmates. I don't feel I can predict the future, but I am keeping part of my focus on the short term and part of it on developing new ways of working for the next year or so. If anyone would like to take lessons in finger style blues or beginning lap-style slide guitar, they can reach me at [lessons@ryanleecrosby.com](mailto:lessons@ryanleecrosby.com)"

Singer-songwriter-guitarist Lainey Dionne tells me, "I've had about 30 gigs cancel on me from March through the first week of June. I haven't been able to collect unemployment and I'm not sure where exactly I went wrong with that, but trying to get in touch with them to ask about it is very daunting. I did receive my stimulus check, which did help a little and was successful in getting grants from a few artists relief programs. I felt weird about a virtual tip jar on livestreams at first, so for my first 10 shows I didn't do it but this past week I decided to give it a go. Since I've spent money on making my livestream high quality with great equipment and got the hang of the live interface, I felt okay with releasing my Venmo information and people have been very kind. I really have been enjoying the livestreams and it's more interactive than live shows since you can see what each individual is saying and have a chance to respond. I am very lucky to have dedicated friends and fans. I have also been songwriting and promoting my new music and it is nice to have the extra time to really focus on that. It is also scary at the same time to think what the future holds and how we're going to pay our bills. I have had my moments where I have panic attacks about how to stay afloat and how much longer can staying afloat last. It is a very scary time, but I'm doing my best and so far I'm treading water. I had my first live in-person show on Memorial Day at Revolution and the measures they took made me feel very safe to play. I am immunocompromised, so I was nervous to start playing out again. However, I was in my own tent outside, completely roped off from the public so no one could get close to me, and they took every precaution to keep the patrons safe as well. It was a very successful, fun, safe show and I hope to safely play out more in the near future!" [laineydionne.com](http://laineydionne.com)

Pianist, songwriter, bandleader, Empire Revue host and creative director, Keith Munslow sent me this to me. "I did eventually receive my stimulus money, but it took a long while and the process was quite confusing. I was also able to collect unemployment, which has helped significantly. I have done a bit of streaming, but trying not to over-saturate. I've made a bit of money that way, somewhat equivalent to playing a club gig. As for creative writing, I was in the final stages of finishing up a new album of music for kids when the pandemic and subsequent quarantine unfolded. Through the magic of technology, and some studio wizardry, we were able to complete the album. It's currently in production and being duplicated right now. I'm also doing some collaborative writing of both songs and sketches for the Empire Revue, which has been wonderfully therapeutic. We've done two virtual shows thus far. Overall, I'd say I'm doing OK. But the thing that is really challenging is not getting to share a relationship with an audience in the same room. I'm feeling starved of that exchange of energy and feeling of community." [keithmunslow.com](http://keithmunslow.com)

Massachusetts singer-songwriter-guitarist, Molly Pinto Madigan tells me, "I'm not collecting unemployment. I'm still writing, still making music and stories, still connecting with fans via Patreon and social media. Grateful for places like Club Passim that are doing livestream concerts and helping artists with their PEAR Fund." [mollypintomadigan.com](http://mollypintomadigan.com)

Multi-award winning folk artist Aubrey Atwater says, "Since I talked to you two months ago, I feel much more calm. This mandated sabbatical is a blessing in many ways. When you are self-employed, you rarely give yourself a break and I've been hustling non-stop for over 35 years. It took THIS to take a rest. Thankfully I have been able to collect unemployment and we also got stimulus checks, which has made a huge difference in my perception of personal stress and disruption. Having been a full-time

musician since 1993 and having never had any kind of state or federal benefits, I am stunned and relieved to be getting this help. I am doing a few online appearances when people invite us. Zoom and other platforms are WONDERFUL and I think we are all very fortunate to have these ways to keep in touch and perform. But of course, I prefer people in person and MISS our audiences. This pandemic is hurting my feelings! But, almost every day, Elwood and I play music together, happily reviewing our repertoire, keeping our songs alive and musical muscles limber and reviving some music, especially songs we wrote. Every song triggers marvelous thoughts and memories. I have an unflappable faith we will resume concerts and other live events and return to some version of normal, but I think it will take a while and for that reason and others, my moods and sense of optimism fluctuate. I also believe this pandemic will permanently change our lives and society. Just look at the history of any other pandemic or plague. I embrace all good change and silver linings and hope we can hold onto the good lessons around what we value most, who we love, as well as consume less and treat our planet better as we move forward. During this time, I notice music has a great role in people's connection to others, comfort and love of beauty. And I believe live music will always and eternally be in great demand — nothing can ever replace it. I hear from people every day about how they miss us and live music in general. I realize at Elwood's and my age and stage and level of safety, that this is not as hard on us as it may be for younger or less financially robust musicians. It is certainly an age of disappointment and stress for us all. But because Elwood and I have done so much in our lives, traveled relentlessly for decades, and are stable in our home, we are embracing this rest and savoring the lessons while we protect ourselves and hope for the best possible outcome for all. We have faith that we all will be able to convene together again at concerts and festivals, and be richer in spirit and more appreciative of live music when we do." [atwater-donnely.com](http://atwater-donnely.com)

RI Music Legend and Hall of Fame member Mark Cutler tells me, "I'm doing workshops and lessons online. I also do an online show once a week. I'm also working on a couple of projects in my home studio. They've helped me out a lot creatively and a bit financially. I think the clubs and venues will reopen but the main thing we need is a vaccine. Once we get that, things will return to normal. Until then, I'm working from home. I don't trust what many politicians say, especially the ones who don't listen to scientific research. I do trust that we will have a vaccine and hopefully, we'll find new ways of performing for the public because of this situation. I miss the hell out of playing music with my friends but we've already lost family members to COVID. It's a long and grueling death and I get the feeling the people who are up in arms about wearing masks, probably haven't dealt with losing someone to it." [mcutler.com](http://mcutler.com)[www.facebook.com/markcutler.RI](https://www.facebook.com/markcutler.RI)

Open Mic Host at Askew, music teacher and singer-songwriter-guitarist, Beth Barron wrote to me, "For me, my reality totally shifted. A couple of days after this initial interview I was laid off. I teach piano, guitar and vocal lessons to beginners ranging from young children to adults part time. After the lay off, I made the choice to teach full time and I am forever grateful for it. This whole experience forced me to challenge myself as a teacher and musician and the courage to truly provide for myself working for myself." [facebook.com/beth.barron.54](https://facebook.com/beth.barron.54)

Singer-songwriter-guitarist, music teacher, Providence Folk Festival host Steve Allain responded with, "It certainly has been strange not playing live gigs for over 2 months now. I've done a few Facebook live

streaming concerts, but it just kind of feels strange and awkward to play to a screen. Even though people are listening in and commenting. People have been generous online with donations for those shows, but it certainly hasn't replaced all of the lost income from shows that were booked. And without any newer merchandise, sales have been mostly non-existent. I try not to be too pessimistic about it, but I have kind of written off any live shows through the end of the year. That way, hopefully I will be pleasantly surprised if live music comes back and gigs start happening again. With the nice weather and restaurants opening outdoor seating, I think it's possible that they could start to add live music this summer. I guess we'll have to wait and see." [steveallain.com](http://steveallain.com)

RI Blues legend and RI Hall of Fame Member Duke Robillard writes, "We are taking every precaution. I personally don't feel like things are going to be safe for quite a while. I see way too many people without masks not distancing themselves and think the worst is not over. I feel for everyone who is distressed by this situation. I am lucky that between royalties, my online guitar lessons and social security I can make ends meet. Of course I live in fear on social security being cut at anytime. I always remain musically active in some form but miss gigging a lot. But my lessons, radio show, recording at home, painting and gardening keep me occupied. I feel it's a good time to re-evaluate our lifestyle and find what's truly important. Hopefully we'll come out of this wiser. BTW, I don't get involved in streaming. I'm not very digital age savvy. And I don't mind staying that way." [dukerobillard.com](http://dukerobillard.com)

Award winning band member, music teacher, violinist, Amy Bedard and I talked and she told me, "I have been very fortunate because I still have income from my full-time teaching job. All of my gigs have been canceled except for one at Common Fence Music, where we did a live stream. My wedding business is suffering for this summer/fall, but I am still getting bookings for next year, so I'm sure that it will bounce back. I am hopeful that musicians will be able to perform again soon either outside or through livestream concerts until things get back to normal. but venues will have to be creative and help. This is already beginning to happen. I am hoping some outdoor concerts can be arranged for the summer/fall." [ForeverYoungNeilYoungTribute.com](http://ForeverYoungNeilYoungTribute.com)

Award winning singer-songwriter-guitarist, Joanne Lurgio says, "I am getting by and doing okay here, best I can. Time drags by and other times it flies, it is so weird; high days and low days. I am a singer. The latest we are hearing is that the act of singing itself raises the risk of transmission. Well, that's not encouraging. I am a former safety consultant; it is in my DNA to act safely, to listen to science. While this is frustrating, I understand my need and responsibility to listen carefully and act appropriately for my safety as well as the safety of others and as I mentioned last time we spoke, I have to be safe for mom's sake as well. It isn't just about me. Like everyone else, I want to get back to work, but not until it is safe for me and listeners. Financially, I did receive a stimulus check and qualified for unemployment which is very helpful. Ironically, the stimulus check came just in time to my pay real estate tax, life saver. A most wonderful surprise was a \$100 Stop & Shop gift card from TUNE IN & TUNE UP, RI Music Hall of Fame. It must have been one of my low days when I read the email from Russell Gusetti letting me know they were sending me the gift card, I cried. Little things. I was very grateful. I have continued my LIVE at FIVE, Safe at Home daily song share week days via FB Live, today's song share will be #56, 11 weeks of song. People are missing music. People are missing friends. So many started to plan on meeting me LIVE at FIVE. If they miss the live share they replay on FB or on my website video

page. The wonderful feedback and connection with music friends is what has kept me singing Safe at Home. It has been fun and feels good. I didn't set out to make money from these songs share, it was not and still is not my intention; however, at the insistence of friends, I added a tip jar to my website for those who wanted to give and were looking for a means to do so. I felt funny about that, but it is there on homepage and video page. I admit, I was a bit overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of my music friends reaching out saying, "Thank You." Very special.

The daily song share is about the extent of my creativity during this craziness. I did write one song, and I just keep singing. Taking care of my mom is still my first priority. I have no idea what the future will be for my music. Might be time to re event myself again. Churches are starting to open up with limitations so I will be getting calls to sing funerals & memorial services again. I don't see me getting back in to sing at the nursing homes anytime soon. I did send the Activity Directors my video link and many have been sharing my Youtube videos with the residents to enjoy in their community rooms. I have been told they add a bit of sunshine for both the residents & staff who are missing the music. Restaurants and concert venues have a lot deal with as they look for safe ways to open up again and to provide safe environment for staff and listeners; much to be considered. As a musician, I want to be certain that I will be going into a safe working environment. It is an unprecedented pandemic; a day to day learning experience. We will have to be patient and see what the future brings and where and how our music will fit in. I don't know what it will look like, but I know there will be a place. Music Heals." [joanelurgio.com](http://joanelurgio.com)

Little by little music is very growing through the cracks. Hopefully it will soon be in full bloom again. The summer concert season has basically been completely canceled, most likely rescheduled to 2021. You will have to check for show particulars. I know, it's hard to think that far in advance. I just re-booked a show for May 2021! In the meantime some venues are trying to keep you entertained online. The Narrows Center for the Arts will be hosting live shows online every Friday night at 8pm on the Narrows YouTube channel. You can catch acts such as: Colby James and the Ramblers, GA-20, Brian Dunne; Songwriter's Circle with Chuck Williams, Louie Leeman and Mike Laureanno, Mark Erelli, The Breakers-Tribute to Tom Petty, and more. Check out the Narrows site for the complete schedule and link to shows ([narrowscenter.org](http://narrowscenter.org)). Common Fence Music will also be doing live concert streams. They will feature shows by Ethan Leinwand on June 7 and The Vox Hunters on June 21. Check out the CFM site for more about these shows ([commonfencemusic.org](http://commonfencemusic.org)).

That's it for now. Thanks for reading. [JohnFuzek.com](http://JohnFuzek.com)

BTW, I still think you should all #StayTheFuckHome but if you do go out PLEASE be smart, social distance and wear a mask — the virus is far from done with us! Also, more importantly, #DumpTrump2020!!!

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## [Video Killed the Radio Star: Our binge-watching expert recommends a few favorite music docs](#)

Okee dokee folks...I haven't had much, if anything, to write about as of late. Concerts are canceled. I haven't had a lot of motivation either. This is all very depressing, and we are all handling things very differently. Some folks immediately took to live streaming their music while I have not picked up my guitar since my last real life gig at the beginning of March. I am not very technologically proficient nor am I a fan. I do not have a smart phone and I have little to no desire to perform in front of a computer. I feed off the energy of an audience and going virtual just don't do it for me.

Performance is more than can be live streamed. It is an experience. Yes, I am stubborn and stuck in my ways. I do realize that I will more than likely HAVE TO upgrade my life and get with this new normal, but I will probably do it kicking and screaming like any other change I have had to endure. All of this affects people differently. Some will come out of this with three albums of music and others will forget how to play. Unless things change I will be the latter. I can actually feel my brain turning to mush as I binge watch season after season of shows on Netflix, Prime, HBO and Showtime. I am running out of shows to watch. I try to lose myself in these shows because reality is just making me more and more angry. I watch PBS news nightly (BTW, it is one of the only reliable news sources) only to see that the mango moron has done something more stupid than the previous day and is trying to blame someone else for his fuck ups. The money that has been approved to help hasn't gotten to where it is needed. I haven't gotten any.

I did receive some financial assistance from the Newport Festivals Foundation, RISCA and The RI Music Hall of Fame (THANK YOU!) and this helps to cover some the lost funds from canceled gigs. The problem is that long term, most musicians are screwed. Gigs have been canceled and rescheduled and then canceled again and then rescheduled until NEXT YEAR. We really don't know when we will be playing live again. We don't even know if the venues that we have been performing at will even reopen, and if they do, if they'll be able afford to have music. The summer festival season is canceled. I am already seeing gigs for the end of the year being canceled. I am not being pessimistic about all of this, I am just being realistic. No one has any money now. Even if we all survive the pandemic, will we survive the economic depression that will follow?

I am not one of those gun-toting idiots marching on city hall wanting the economy to open. I believe that the shut down has been necessary for our protection. I don't think there is any nefarious reasoning behind it like others do, but I do think that we are probably headed for some kind of dystopian future as

a result of the concessions that have been made.

Anyway, I will shut up now. It's not all doom and gloom. I will try to be positive. I have watched a lot of great music documentaries over the past couple of months. If you are into music as much as I am, you should check some of them out. They are quite entertaining and just like when I was getting my art history minor, you can learn a bit about general history of the times as well, as art mirrors life. Read on...

YouTube has a lot of music docs and concerts available that you can watch for free. Recently I went down the rabbit hole watching Kate Bush docs and videos. I have been a fan of hers since 1978 when I saw her on "Don Kirshner's Rock Concert." It's easy to get sucked into these videos because it is both entertaining and nostalgic. I also found great documentaries about the Jefferson Airplane and Pink Floyd. Many of the episodes of the VH1 series "Behind the Music" and "Classic Albums" as well as "The Midnight Special," "Rock Concert," "Old Grey Whistle Test" and so many others can be watched on YouTube. Just roll up your sleeves and start searching.

On Netflix the music film that recommend most is *Echo in the Canyon*. I have watched this about 25 times. The music is great, as is the story. It focuses on the Laurel Canyon music scene in the mid '60s and stars Jakob Dylan, Michelle Phillips, Beck and many others. Even though I am not a John Lennon fan, *Above Us Only Sky* is a wonderful film about the making of the *Imagine* album. *The Other One: The Long Strange Trip of Bob Weir* is a must-see for Deadheads, but it might make you a Deadhead as well. Rush's *Beyond The Lighted Stage*, *Woodstock: Three Days That Defined a Generation*, *The Rolling Stones* and *Ole, Ole, Ole!: A Trip Across Latin America* are all also available on Netflix and worthy of your viewing time.

Showtime has Eric Clapton's *Life in 12 Bars*, *Duran Duran: There's Something You Should Know*, Jeff Lynne's *ELO: Wembley or Bust*, David Bowie's *Finding Fame* and *Miles To Go Before I Sleep* (about roadies). The good thing about Showtime is that you can sign up for a 30 day FREE trial!

Your local library may have a free streaming service called Hoopla. You log in with your library card number. Not all RI libraries offer this service, so you will need to check your local library. Tubi is a free streaming service that offers films and documentaries with commercials. There are lots of music-related videos there, too. Of particular interest may be the Muscle Shoals recording studio doc, *Song of the South*, the Duane Allman documentary, *Sad Vacation* about Sid and Nancy, *The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour*, *Jimi Hendrix: The Uncut Story*, *Festival Express* (highly recommended documentary about a post Woodstock tour of musicians on a train across North America), Paul McCartney & Wings *Rockshow* live concert, Cream's *Farewell Concert*, Steely Dan's *Aja* and many more.

On Amazon Prime there is a great six-part series about the Grateful Dead that I thoroughly enjoyed even though I am just a lightweight Dead fan. Tom Petty's *Running Down a Dream* is a must-see for any musician whether you like Petty or not. "CSNY" fans can be satisfied with Neil Young's *The First Decade* and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's *Fifty by Four*. Docs about the Kinks, Pink Floyd, Stevie Nicks, Van Morrison, Jackson Browne, Thin Lizzy, Queen, The Police, Robert Johnson, Led Zeppelin, Chicago's Terry Kath, Family Band: The Cowsills (highly recommended), Beach Boys, Nirvana and the list goes on and on. Like I said before, you can easily go down the rabbit hole and get lost in these music docs for hours and hours. It's an easy way to kill a Corona Day and right now, we have all the time in the world even if we don't want it.

Stand Up Comedy is also something that I love. The best specials that are out now are Marc Maron's *End Times Fun* (the last 15 minutes about Pence is PRICELESS!), Jen Kirkman's *Just Keep Livin'*, Bert Kreischer's *Hey Big Boy*, anything by Sebastian Maniscalco, and Taylor Tomlinson's *Quarter Life Crisis*, all of which are on Netflix.

That's it for now. Join me in my binging of TV and have your mind turn to mush, too! Thanks for reading. [www.JohnFuzek.com](http://www.JohnFuzek.com) #StayTheFuckHome #DumpTrump2020

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## [Quarantime: Why not learn to play an instrument?](#)

Okee dokee folks... Last week I wrote about the way social distancing and the show cancellations that came in its wake have affected artists. If you didn't have a chance to read it, please do. (<https://motifri.com/music-in-the-time-of-corona-musicians-talk-about-the-impact-of-losing-gigs-during-social-distancing/> )

"We are all pretty much in the same boat and that boat is the Titanic and it just hit the iceberg. Some folks are taking off alone in the lifeboats while others are giving up their seats." I will add, "The captain is a moron and his ineptness is adding to the panic." My good friend and bandmate Dan Lilley has the perfect song for this. His "No Captain at the Wheel" is a great tune about lack of leadership. If any of the past month's shows had gone on, you could have had the pleasure of seeing him perform it live. Hopefully a recording of it will show up online. Turn on the music, turn off Trump. He is a directionless, narcissistic sociopath and is trying to feed his ego by holding daily press briefings only because he can't hold his own rallies. His denial is what got us into this mess. A proper pandemic response would have lessened what is happening now. My stomach turns from anything Trump. He is the real virus affecting



this country! #TrumpVirus Onto what little music news there is. Read on...

If you haven't already noticed, the internet has been flooded with livestream concerts by artists from those whose only performance experience is in their bedroom all the way to legends like Neil Young. Most are just trying to entertain the isolated while others think they may become the plague's Justin Bieber. One of those is more than we (never) ever needed. It is virtually impossible to even list who is doing them, just assume EVERYONE is doing them and check out your favorite artist's Facebook or web page. Some are asking for money for themselves while others are raising funds to help with this crisis. Money is very scarce with most folks nowadays so be wise and spend it where you can and where it is needed most. When, and if, this is all over and we are back to whatever normal is, please remember that it was more than likely music, movies and books — art — that got you through and saved you from slitting your wrists in isolation. Art is a necessity in civilization for education, communication, growth and entertainment.

While there are no shows for the foreseeable future, there is plenty of music to listen to. I am sure that after the quarantine period ends that there will be even more. I am often asked to review recordings, but I usually tend to pass on doing so. Why? First of all I give brutally honest critiques and that is not always a welcome thing. I went to art school. There we were subjected to and involved in critiques on a daily basis. It teaches you a lot about criticizing and toughens you up about criticism. I am also a musician and have been playing music for 45 years and have been performing, producing and involved in the RI music scene for over 35 years. Working on both sides of the musical fence gives me a unique perspective on music. Also, I know a lot of the local musicians personally and that could prove to be an awkward situation. In spite of all this, during this lull in live performances I guess I should soften my "no CD review" stance. If you have a project that you have released in the past year send me a LINK to the recordings or MP3s. Please e-mail me first to discuss. I don't want a physical CD. I have bins of CDs and no more room! Besides, I don't want any COVID-19 deliveries and who knows when I will get to the post office! Only send the music to me if you are up for honesty! I will write about the projects that I choose and post them online as I get them done. E-mail me at [RISongwriters@yahoo.com](mailto:RISongwriters@yahoo.com)

I hope we all enjoy the QuarantiMe! Make the best of it. Learn that instrument that has been collecting dust in the closet. Plenty of musicians are providing online lessons. Again, just find your favorite performer and check their site. Facetime, Skype, Zoom and other platforms are being used to teach. I honestly don't understand how anyone can be bored already when there is so much to do at home! Get to it!

Anyway, DUMP TRUMP 2020!!! - "He is dangerous!" Put that line from a Jesus Christ Superstar song in your head. You could have heard it at PPAC live, but alas, like everything else that show has been canceled, too. That's it for now. Thanks for reading. [JohnFuzek.com](http://JohnFuzek.com) #StayTheFuckHome

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## [Music in the Time of Corona: Musicians talk about the impact of losing gigs during social distancing](#)



Okee dokee folks... “Splendid Isolation” is a song by the late, great Warren Zevon. Seventeen years after his death it has now become a theme song for most of the planet. Social distancing is the new norm and we have whittled down the the allowable crowd size from 250 to 10 or fewer. Hugs and handshakes are taboo. That’s all fine with me as I have never been much of a fan of social interaction anyway. I remember meeting comedian Steven Wright a few years back when he came to a Forever Young show. When we were introduced there was no handshaking, it was an elbow bump. He was a visionary! Now, we humans greet with a bow, foot taps or even the Vulcan or Wakanda salute. However, we must keep our distance and try not to breathe on one another. Just like Sting sings, “Don’t Stand So Close To Me.”

This has put the kibosh on any kind of social gatherings and that puts a HUGE damper on music performance. Performers everywhere are losing gigs faster than they can cross them off their calendars. Initially shows were canceled for two weeks, then the remainder of the month and now they are stretching until the end of April. This is a major issue for musicians. They may fall between the cracks of any government sponsored solutions. Right now musicians, including myself, are scrambling to try to find not only an outlet for our musical expression but also a means of generating some replacement funding for lost gigs. I spoke with a few musicians who **MAKE THEIR LIVING** from music and asked how they are coping with this crisis. Instead of me slicing up their comments into this column I will let them speak for themselves. Responses are posted below. Yes, it is long but what else do you have to do right now?

Singer-songwriter-guitarist **Betsy Listenfelt** says of how she will deal, "Well...not sure..If I don't work I don't pay my bills...I'm scared as I am sure that others are too. I'm going to try and pay what I can by what's most important and hopefully try and play catch up later? Who knows...I'm hoping there will be some help for people like us."

All Star Band of All Stars Band leader, **David Tessier** says, "I'll tell you when it starts to affect me, I'm married to a woman who has a good job, we just got our taxes in, and I've only had one cancellation so far...I'm in a really fortunate position, but I have had a months worth of gigs still possibly to be canceled sitting in front of me... I'm trying to be optimistic at this point. I will definitely keep you posted..." The next day he sent me an e-mail that everything was canceled.

Massachusetts blues guitarist and instrumentalist, **Ryan Lee Crosby** replied, "Thanks for asking. I am taking it day by day. I have had a number of gig cancellations... and the school where I teach private lessons may shut down for an extended period. TBD. In the meantime, I am teaching private guitar lessons online from my home and looking at options for streaming concerts. It's all minute by minute, day by day though."

Singer-songwriter-guitarist **Lainey Dionne** tells me, "I'm fine. I only had one gig cancel and I filled it with another gig. So far it hasn't affected me really but less people are going out so I guess it affects tips. Friday night I had to end 40 minutes early because there weren't many people left and Saturday I played the whole length and always had people requesting and dancing. I am worried because this is what I do full time and it will definitely affect me if bars cancel on me and I have to pay my bills. But so far it's been good." She followed up the next day with, "Everything is canceled now.. A lot of people are struggling...I'm very lucky that if I needed a safety net my parents would be there. If I knew I wasn't going to be able to survive with this shut down and didn't have help, I would probably get a temp job for a little bit. I still wouldn't ask people for money or do a crowdfunding campaign I don't think unless all of the options were exhausted."

Pianist, songwriter, bandleader, Empire Revue host and creative director, **Keith Munslow** sent me this, "I've lost a lot of income that I rely on just this week. And I'm in the midst of making an album. Hoping that Indiegogo support will help defray the costs of production. I do make some money through royalties. So that's a small cushion. I'm just holding on and hoping the storm passes sooner than later. But, I'll most likely have to dip into my line of credit."

Massachusetts singer-songwriter-guitarist, **Molly Pinto Madigan** tells me, "I'm dealing as best I can... still have some students who haven't canceled — a few via Skype, most in person. I teach music and writing programs at my local library, and those have all been canceled for at least a month. I've had show cancellations too. Luckily, I live with my parents and sister, so I know I'll always have a roof over my head, but I feel for the musicians who are on their own or trying to support a family during these times."

Multi-award winning folk artist **Aubrey Atwater** says, “This is reminding us a bit of the economic crash of 2008 where I often describe our career as going through a sieve. For a year or two, many gigs were canceled or shut down and we had to reboot, reinvent ourselves, and reach out to new venues and organizations to piece our job back together. We have made our full living as musicians since the '90s and have always been vulnerable to certain kinds of forces. Our schedule for March and some of April just got completely slaughtered. Ironically, it was the most booked we have been all year- about 15 gigs and some in April are already canceled too, including a big trip with a large guarantee. Elwood (her husband and musical partner) and I are older and have financial reserves and so we are not excessively worried about the short term for ourselves...I worry about friends and family who are in vulnerable industries like ours (son Noah runs Nick-a-Nees and son Uriah runs The Collaborative in Warren)) who are feeling the hit. There are a lot of moving parts—the economy, our jobs, and our safety which is most important. I am concerned with protecting Elwood’s health in particular. That is paramount and I think we are doing the right thing by all isolating and staying safe. So, we are just going to wait it out like everyone else, try not to freak out, do different things, try to enjoy some of the silver linings like free time, organize our offices, sit in the sun and think, read, clean out the basement, slow down, enjoy nature and music, regroup creatively as far as what we want to be doing with our lives, connect with friends and relatives on the phone and social media. Like, it dawned on me immediately that, at this point in my long career, I would like to travel less and do more programs with children. I absolutely love working with kids of all ages. So, for whatever reasons, I think this is going to cause a lot of us to change and think about what we are doing, how we are doing it and what we want to do once restrictions are lifted and we find out what is out there and available for us to do. I am particularly concerned about younger and more economically vulnerable musicians and also many young friends who have had major career gigs canceled this week. Horribly disappointing for them and scary, financially. Let’s all keep an eye on each other and see how we can help each other during this time. And think about creative solutions to make some money while we wait. One gig for example, that wasn’t canceled, is something I am doing in April on the internet so, there’s an example of getting paid while socially distancing. I already see musicians doing things like that. I want to reassure younger musicians who have never been through something like this to have faith.”

RI Music Legend and Hall of Fame member **Mark Cutler**, tells me, “I’ve been mostly absent from gigs for the last year or so due to my illness. I was planning on returning in March but because of the Coronavirus, those have been canceled. To make ends meet I do lessons, one on one sessions with songwriters and small recording sessions. My Same Thing Project and other songwriting workshops are out on hold for now. There’s a lot of elbow bumping instead of hand shaking and I have plenty of hand sanitizer on hand. Depending on how long this lasts will determine how I make out. I’ll probably do some on line shows and see how that works out. This is uncharted territory. It’s like a snow day with a little menace thrown in. If it goes on too long, things could get ugly.”

Open mic host at Askew, music teacher and singer-songwriter-guitarist, **Beth Barron** wrote to me, “Getting through it by realizing how hard self care is already for active musicians and most of us have day jobs- taking a step back during all the chaos and sharing our music, poetry, our therapy through live video has actually created a way to have more community than ever. But surviving financially ... I am fortunate and able to manage but I am the music memory interventionist at Homecare assistance of Rhode Island And I work with folks diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and dementia — still figuring out

logistics and unfortunately still don't know where it stands with work to keep that population healthy. All I know is staying in- staying safe, giving self care and self is so needed. Even with the unknowing — I'm safe with the community through social media (which I never though I'd say)."

Singer-songwriter-guitarist, music teacher, Providence Folk Festival host **Steve Allain** responded with, "Currently, my only sources of income are from gigging and teaching. It's a pretty strange time and certainly unprecedented. It's scary because we don't really have a sense of how long this will go on for, or the impact that it will have on so many of us. And that includes so many beyond those of us who make a living in music. Most of us wouldn't trade what we do for the world. But unfortunately, most of us are barely keeping our heads above water financially. So even losing a few gigs can leave us without enough to literally pay rent. The other difficult piece to this puzzle is booking. I haven't sent out any booking requests for the past few days. In part because it feels weird to do so at a time like this. But more importantly, I've been following a few threads on social media where other musicians have asked about this as well. Some promoters and venue owners have chimed in saying that they were not taking requests right now. They have had to cancel shows, or were forced to shut down, and are waiting to see when things will settle because they are going to try to re-book artists who's dates got canceled. The problem is, many places book pretty far out. So if you're not reaching out now, you will feel the effects of this for months to come. As far as teaching is concerned, I teach private lessons in my home, not at a school or business. So far, it hasn't affected me in a negative way. But I know some friends of mine have started offering lessons online for people who either don't want to go out or have been quarantined. I know that I have had to take extra precautions at my home since I do have students coming in and out. Things like cleaning/disinfecting the teaching area, having students wash hands and offer hand sanitizer, etc. Something else I have seen is musicians reaching out asking about other part time work for now to help keep them afloat. Some of us may have to do whatever jobs we can find to make ends meet for now. The positive spin is that we are a tight knit community who does look out for each other. I've seen people reaching out offering help, suggestions or just encouragement to many of those who are finding themselves struggling or worried about the near future."

RI Blues legend and RI Hall of Fame Member **Duke Robillard** tells me, "So far it's not an issue with me because I had a lot of March and April off to record and such. But I still live the life of most musicians and need to work on a fairly regular basis not only to pay the bills but to also keep my chops in shape. I'm praying this goes away soon because it could be devastating to many musicians, actors and people in the arts world. The music biz for most is still a hand to mouth situation and luck is a factor."

Award winning band member, music teacher, violinist, **Amy Bedard** and I talked and she told me, "Right now I've had two gigs canceled, but I have one tomorrow...Don't actually feel safe playing it, it's in a crowded Irish pub... St. Patricks Day...I bowed out of a gig with them (her band) last night and I NEVER do that...It was in a small pub..no stage and people too close...I will lose a significant amount of income in the coming weeks...school is out but we will make up days at the end of the year...most teachers will be paid, for now...but there's still so many young people out in bars, CROWDED bars...why?"

Award winning singer-songwriter-guitarist, **Joanne Lurgio** says, “How am I coping? I am caregiver for my mom and had already cut back on my evening gigs leaving me more dependent on my day gigs at nursing homes and funerals to get by. Then came coronavirus, it wasn’t long before all of the nursing homes canceled vendors and visitors. Understandably, as the seniors are the vulnerable to this virus.

“I admit, as I starting getting cancellation notifications one after another, I did have a moment of panic wondering how I will pay our bills. I also realize we are all in the same boat as there is something much bigger going on around us. I do have savings that will get me through for a bit. No more panic, I cannot change what’s happening. We will survive and come back singing loud! Hopefully, sooner than later. On March 15th the people of Italy who are quarantined in their homes organized a mass song share from their balconies at 6pm which was 1pm here RI. At 1 pm I opened my window and sang in solidarity on a FaceBook live video. I got a such a great response from so many friends grateful for the music they say lifted their spirits. With that, I decided I will share a song everyday on FaceBook live. It isn’t much, but it is my small offering of some music healing.”

Though the mass cancellations just started, musicians are already turning to live streaming platforms and posting pre-recorded videos to make up for lack of in person, live performing. The best place to find sources for this is on Facebook or the particular performer’s website. Some are playing for free, some charge a fee and some take virtual donations. A Facebook page dedicated to live performing called Quarantine Livestream has been set up by singer-songwriter-guitarist, Tammy LaForest. Other sites and music venues are featuring live streams as well. Keep on the lookout for these. Everything is changing so fast that it is impossible to keep up.

One thing that bothers me right now are the folks who are jumping on the live stream bandwagon that are not full time musicians. A lot of these folks have day gigs and have the regular paycheck to depend on and will probably have some benefits to fall back on. If you see them asking for money for a show I would think twice unless they note that they are under hardship. Full time musicians have it tough enough right now and don’t need competition from hobbyists. While I respect both and love everyone making music I’ve seen some hobbyists doing paid streaming shows and it is the wrong time to be competing with the full time musicians who are trying to invent a new income stream. Right now there is not a lot of money to go around and for people to give to musicians in general. Besides the lost income, folks may have already spent what extra they have on pandemic supplies, you know, like toilet paper. So, be generous, but please be generous to those who really are in need.

Some music venues operate within a narrow margin and are already hurting. Some are turning to crowdfunding to pay their bills. If you have a favorite venue you may want to check their status and help if possible. One venue, Common Fence Music has canceled the remainder of their Spring Season but has decided to go ahead with their annual fundraiser, but will do it online.

Common Fence Music has opted for a safer and healthier alternative to the live music event. The local

non-profit will move forward with their Love + Harmony Benefit Concert, scheduled for Saturday, March 28 at 8pm, without any audience present. Instead, local and regional artists will perform to a bare bones production staff who will broadcast the event live from the Common Fence Point Arts, Wellness & Community Center in Portsmouth, RI to the CFM YouTube channel. "Realizing the holistic benefits of maintaining artistic engagement and connections as we navigate through this difficult time as a society, CFM is making access to this live stream free to the public." You will still be able to view the show after it has aired as the video will be posted to the CFM YouTube channel which can be reached via a link on the CFM website, [commonfencemusic.org](http://commonfencemusic.org). The show will feature an array of local and regional talent, including Avi Jacob, Bank of Ireland, Dan Lilley & Amy Bedard, Emerald Ray, Haunt the House, Hawthorn, Hollow Turtle and Slackwater String Band. Local multi-instrumentalist and host of WRIU's Traditions program, Tom Duksta will emcee the evening. CFM is dedicated to establishing a safe environment in which the artists and production team can continue to work. They are partnering with the CFP Arts, Wellness & Community Center to ensure facility sanitation meets CDC guidelines. Viewers will witness vocal microphones being swapped out and sanitized throughout the event. The benefit will kick-off the organization's 2020 Spring Matching Campaign. Viewers of the live stream will be encouraged to support the non-profit by making donations through the CFM website. Unable to run their related silent auction in person, they are also shifting this portion of their event to an online platform, beginning the bidding during the live stream and running through Friday, April 3rd. For more, epidemic over to [CommonFenceMusic.org](http://CommonFenceMusic.org)

For musicians, much of the lost income may never be recouped and the postponed gigs never rescheduled. The booking of more shows may be tough. I can tell you now that after things get back to "normal" there will be a glut of shows all trying happen at the same time. Things are being rescheduled for future dates already. But some artists already may have shows scheduled for the replacement date that a venue may offer. Performance schedules will be a mess for a long time. Nowadays, national, touring artists may have shows booked a year out. Venues are the same way. Music fans will have to be patient while calendars realign to allow musicians to play their music and for you to be able to get to their shows.

Not only are gigs interrupted but rehearsals are as well. This is something that many may not realize. It is hard to physically distance yourself from other members in a band when you practice in a small, confined space. Rehearsals are the key to unifying each member's contribution into a single performance. This really can only be done in person. In the film, *The Rocker*, Rainn Wilson and his band try to rehearse via the internet and the sensation, "The Naked Drummer" is born. While you have nothing to do during quarantine look it up on YouTube. Although the concept of internet rehearsals seems like a perfect solution some are not technically apt enough to carry this out or have the proper gear to do it. This may lengthen the time that a band is out of the picture after the all clear signal is sounded on this pandemic. We shall see.

Anyway, we are all pretty much in the same boat and that boat is the Titanic and it just hit the iceberg. Some folks are taking off alone in the lifeboats while others are giving up their seats. People show their true colors under extreme circumstances. In the end this will hopefully be a learning experience, but probably only for some. Some folks are incapable of learning and we observe this by seeing history

repeat. As far as you musicians out there, when the time comes to start performing again you may want to upgrade your social interaction practices. You will at minimum want to get some microphone disinfectant for those shared performances but maybe try to start bringing your own mic. Look into virtual ways of receiving tips instead of actual cash. Use your head, think about what has happened and evolve. Those who evolve will be the ones to survive and prosper.

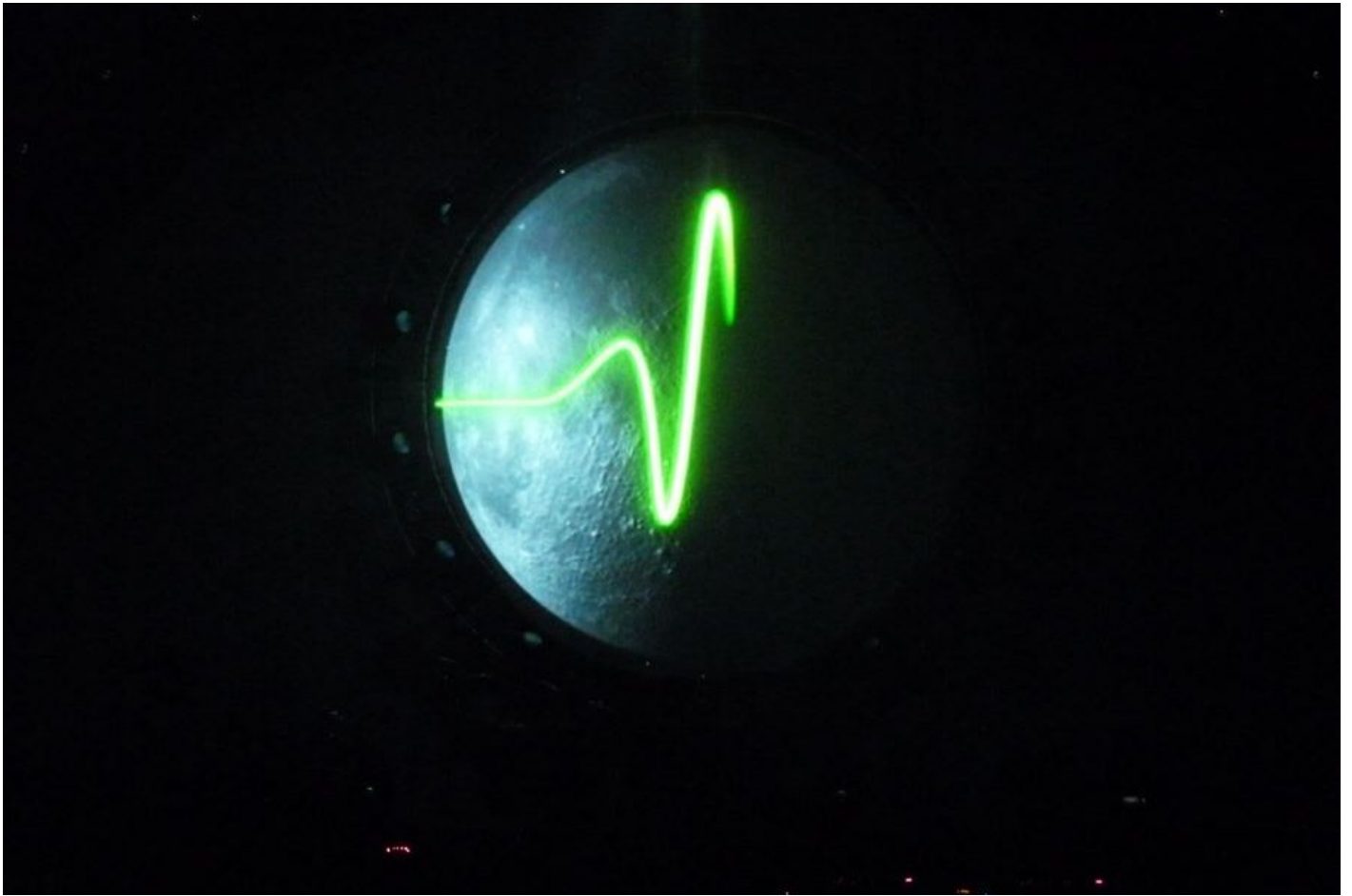
A proper pandemic response would have lessened what is happening now. Economic insecurity will shake the labor market and our inadequate medical system will be overwhelmed quickly. This all should have been addressed long ago. Actually some of it was, but the Mango Moron eliminated it and then denied the reality closing in. Maybe with an actual LEADER instead of a narcissistic sociopath at the helm we can weather the next plague more efficiently, and judging by the past, there surely be another. Anyway, that's it for now. Now, more than ever, we need to DUMP TRUMP 2020!!! Thanks for reading. [www.JohnFuzek.com](http://www.JohnFuzek.com) #StayTheFuckHome

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## **Brit Floyd Comes to The Vets**

Okee dokee folks...





Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour turned 74 years old a couple of days ago, and Roger Waters is 76 as is Nick Mason. Founding members Richard Wright and Syd Barrett have passed away. The band has not played together in many, many years and for all intents and purposes Pink Floyd is no more. Their music, however, lives on. More than 250 million Pink Floyd albums have been sold worldwide.

David Gilmour doesn't tour very often. Roger Waters performed at the Newport Folk Festival a couple of years ago and will be in Boston this coming July. While he surely will perform Floyd cuts you probably won't get to hear some of the deep cuts or many of the songs that you would like to. One cure for this lack of Pink is Brit Floyd, "The World's Greatest Pink Floyd Show" from England. They will be bringing their Echoes 2020 production to Veterans Memorial Auditorium on Tuesday, March 10. I spoke with Brit Floyd guitarist Damian Darlington via phone about the band and their upcoming show at Vets.

Brit Floyd just returned from a mini tour of Japan so I asked what other countries that they have performed in. He informed me that they have performed "in just about every country in Europe" as well as Lebanon, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Russia, and "all sorts of places!" Being in a tribute band myself, I was curious as to how he wound up part of this Floyd Tribute. As he put it, "A chance opportunity that came my way" landed Damian in another Pink Floyd tribute starting back in '94 and lasted for 17 years. "I found that I was good at recreating Pink Floyd's music. About 10 years ago I made the decision to

leave that band and started my own which is where Brit Floyd comes in...it was sort of born out of all that experience...like an apprenticeship that's been served."

For his part in Brit Floyd, Damian plays guitar, sings and is the musical director for the band. In some tribute acts the members morph into imitations of the musicians they are trying to replicate. I asked if they try to take on the personas of Pink Floyd's cast. "Not so much, though there's a little bit like when you are doing something from *The Wall* album...there's something inherently more theatrical about *The Wall* album...you think about some of the things that Roger Waters would have done so we take on a little bit but outside of that, no, we don't put on wigs and try to look like the original members of Pink Floyd...it's more about the visual aspects of the show-the lights, the video...the visual persona of the show." In the past couple of years Roger Waters' concerts have presented anti-Trump messages and videos across the video screens so I wondered about whether Brit Floyd gets political at their shows. He told me that they stay apolitical but "back in the day Pink Floyd would show images of some of the politicians the time...and it was more of a criticism of politicians in general...we will do that but not single out any politician."

Their show boasts "a million dollar light show" so I confirmed with Damian that it is in fact true. "It's not cheap to buy them...on the scale of what we are trying to do...there's lots of moving lights, there's lasers, video projection equipment, all the media playback...it doesn't come cheap that's for sure!" So my question was "have you recouped your investment?" He told me, "Brit Floyd is a successful touring band and people are managing to make a living out of it...we're constantly investing, reinvesting in the show...replacing stuff that gets old and worn out...so, yes, we managed to recoup our investment along the way but more often than not we reinvest in more (laughs)."

The classic Pink Floyd line up was four members so I asked how many members there were in Brit version. "It's nine piece band...I play guitar and vocals, there's a bass player who sings as well, another guitarist, a drummer, keyboard player, a multi-instrumentalist-sax, keyboards, guitar, he's very useful...and then we have three backing vocalists." After doing a little checking about the members on Brit Floyd's website I found that they are actually an international band with players from the UK, US, Canada, Italy, and Poland.

Being a Pink Floyd fan myself my favorite album is *Animals* so I inquired about Damian's pick. "The Wall...it's stayed with me as being my favorite album." That lead me to ask what his favorite song to perform live was. "Umm...probably 'Comfortably Numb', I get to sing the (David) Gilmour part...and I get to play that solo at the end, probably, arguably, one of the best rock guitar solos of all time...that never gets old for me."

I was interested to find out if Darlington had ever crossed paths with any of the members of Pink Floyd. "I have met everybody except Roger Waters...I played at David Gilmour's 50th birthday party...I also got to play 'Comfortably Numb' alongside Rick Wright...I have played with some of the other musicians who

have were part of Pink Floyd's touring band."

Winding up the interview with Darlington I wondered what the audience could expect at Tuesday's show. "We do a performance of 'Echoes'...we're also covering songs from many other albums whether it be The Division Bell, Momentary Lapse of Reason, The Wall...we're doing a track off of Atom Heart Mother which we have never performed before...we're dipping into the Pink Floyd archive." I had to ask if they have the floating pig balloon (Algie) and he revealed that they do but only if the venue can accommodate it. "It's a rather large pig...sometimes they don't have quite enough space...but most of the time we manage to get it into the show." Pink Floyd's pig balloon famously "escaped" and I wondered as to whether theirs had as well. "Ours is firmly tethered, it can't get away like the original one." Damian ended our interview by telling me, "Come on out...you can experience a spectacular recreation of a Pink Floyd show...a time capsule of songs...lights, lasers, everything you would expect to see!"

If you are attending you can expect about two and half hours of Floyd favorites. To catch this Pink experience, "Run Like Hell" to [TheVetsRI.com](http://TheVetsRI.com)

That's it for now. Thanks for reading. [JohnFuzek.com](http://JohnFuzek.com)

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## **Protest Art: Music is more than simply entertainment**

Okee dokee folks... Last week Neil Young posted an open letter calling Drumpf "a disgrace to my country." He also called out Captain Bone Spurs for continuing to use the song "Keep On Rockin' in The Free World" despite Young's disapproval. He went on to add that one of Don the Con's opponents has "the answers I like ... his initials are BS, not his policies." This letter has caused a lot of uncivil discourse on the Neil Young fan pages. Some of Young's right wing fans are posting that he should just shut up, play music and be a nice, subservient jester for the Orange Julius. But if they were true Neil Young fans they would understand that politics and social messages have always been a part of Young's music. The music and the message are intertwined.

I have said this time and again: Art is a means of expression and communication. Since the beginning it has been used for political and social messages. It is NOT just entertainment. People who tell artists to shut up should zip it themselves as they just communicate their profound ignorance. Some fans

complained when CSNY toured with their 2006 Freedom of Speech concerts that railed against GW Bush and some fans just walked out. That was their right just as it was CSNY's right to play the music that expressed disgust with that administration. If I went to a concert and the act started touting their support of Cheeto Jesus, I would first wonder why I hadn't known that information about the particular performer in advance, I would scream some insult about the Tangerine Turd, then I would leave and never support that artist again. It would be my right to boycott that act just as it is their right to express themselves.

We artists and performers will never shut up. We have an obligation to inform and educate with social messages. Young closes his letter with: "We are going to vote you out and make America great again!" Keep your eyes out for Neil Young & Crazy Horse concert announcements. It seems that the Providence Civic Center is on Neil's venue radar, so fingers crossed! Read on...

Central Baptist Church of Jamestown is bringing back CBC Coffee House to the church at 99 Narragansett Avenue. The first of what they hope will be a monthly series will be held on Friday, March 6, with doors at 6:30pm and music at 7pm. There is no formal admission fee; instead, "free-will donations are most gratefully accepted." Opening the evening will be the trio Home Brew, featuring Matt and Judy Bolles with Cheryl Grelle, followed by the duo Perfect Match, featuring Denise and Mike Gouvin. Closing out the evening will be Folk Support Group featuring Ed McGuirl and Mike Fischman.

For some reason, I never had the opportunity to see Pink Floyd in concert. *Dark Side of the Moon* and a certain plant hold a special place in my memories, and I am surely not alone. Locally, musician David Tessier plays the best Floyd covers that I have heard so you should catch his all star band of all stars when you can. The 16-minute "Dogs" is usually on his set list. If you want the FULL Pink Floyd experience, then hit Veterans Memorial Theatre on Tuesday, March 10 when Brit Floyd "The World's Greatest Pink Floyd Show" returns to Providence to perform its brand new production, *Echoes 2020*. It includes highlights from *The Wall*, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, *Wish You Were Here*, *Animals* and *The Division Bell*, as well as a 23-minute note-for-note performance of the iconic song "Echoes," complete with a stunning light show, lasers, inflatables and theatrics. For more, "Run Like Hell" to [thevetsri.com](http://thevetsri.com)

Do you dig The Dead? If so, you will probably want to celebrate Phil Lesh's 80th birthday with Underestimated Prophet at The Met on Sunday, March 15. This FREE show will feature an all-star cast of musicians who may want to Steal Your Face. Joining in the Underestimated Prophet jam will be Rick Couto, Pete Vendettuoli, Bobby Weissberger, Ira Kittrell, Carleen Sauvageau, Jim "Jimbo" Harris, Stephen Vendettuoli, Pete Silvia, Kenny Reynolds and more. Even if you have a "Touch of Grey," don't worry — the show starts at 3pm so it will be an early night! Dance the day away and cast off the "US Blues" that are dragging us all down. For more, get "Truckin'" on over to [themetri.com](http://themetri.com)

The 25th anniversary of "On A Winter's Night," a collection of songs by some of the brightest stars of

the singer-songwriter movement, brings five of the artists together again for an end-of-winter show on Thursday, March 12. In 1994, Christine Lavin put together a compilation of winter love songs by some of her favorite songwriters and took a cast of those singer-songwriters on tour during the cold, dark months. The performers included Cliff Eberhardt, John Gorka, Patty Larkin, Christine Lavin and Cheryl Wheeler. Twenty-five years later, all five of these artists are back together to celebrate and share old and new songs in what has become a kind of mini folk festival. The Zeiterion in New Bedford hosts this Winter's Night show. For more, follow the "Winter Wind" to [zeiterion.org](http://zeiterion.org)

If you had the radio on in the early '90s (remember regular, terrestrial radio?), chances are you frequently heard songs from Toad the Wet Sprocket or the Spin Doctors. The '90s are long gone and so is most good terrestrial radio, but if you liked that time, then you can tune into the Narrows Center for the Arts on Thursday, March 12 and catch Glen Phillips of Toad the Wet Sprocket and Chris Barron of Spin Doctors perform some of the music that defined that decade. I was fortunate to attend Glen Phillips' show last time he was at the Narrows and was quite impressed, so the addition of Barron to the night can only enhance the whole experience. Also coming up at The Narrows are Bonerama, Howard Jones/Rachel Sage and Pousette-Dart. For more, "Walk On The Ocean" to [narrowscenter.org](http://narrowscenter.org)

Beware the Ides! The Greenwich Odeum brings in the duo of Lucy Kaplansky and Richard Shindell on Sunday, March 15. The two songwriters, both with successful solo careers, have been singing together for nearly 30 years. They first met when Shindell hired Kaplansky to sing harmony on his first album, and they became life-long friends and mutual fans. In addition to singing harmonies on virtually all of each other's solo albums, they've collaborated on other projects. In 1998 they joined with Dar Williams to record *Cry Cry Cry*. Then in 2015, Lucy and Richard recorded an album of duets, *Tomorrow You're Going*. The show on the 15th will be one of their final performances together for the foreseeable future because Richard is taking a hiatus from touring and heading home to Argentina. Also at the Odeum, on March 13, Rhode Island's own Cardboard Ox (Steve Allain & Tracie Potochnik) will open for Mason Jennings. For more about these and other Odeum shows, take "The Beauty Way" to [greenwichodeum.com](http://greenwichodeum.com)

Attention all singer-songwriters! The Grassy Hill Songwriting Competition is now open. Songs will be judged on quality of songwriting, and professional recordings are not required. Five finalists will have the opportunity to perform two of their songs at the Connecticut Folk Festival on September 12 in New Haven. The deadline for entering the competition is March 27 and finalists will be notified by May 1. For more, mow over to [bit.ly/grassyhill2020](https://bit.ly/grassyhill2020)

That's it for now. Dump Trump 2020! Thanks for reading. [JohnFuzek.com](http://JohnFuzek.com)

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# Community Hoot at Common Fence Music

Okee dokee folks... Last Saturday night Common Fence Music held their first Community Hoot. This show was in the feel of the old Fiddlers and Fishermen show that was an annual and very popular event at CFM for years. The Community Hoot was basically a scheduled and juried open mic. Participants applied to be part of the show and were given 10 minutes each to present their songs. Ten acts were selected for the Community Hoot and in a bit of a departure from the Fiddlers and Fishermen show, this one had the audience voting for their favorite acts.

At 8pm, Erin Young, CFM programming director and the show's curator, gave the nearly full hall the lowdown on the evening's schedule and then introduced the emcee for the event, Mike Fischman. Mike is a member of the RI Bluegrass Hall of Fame and a long time DJ on WRIU radio. He is also very funny — like having all three of the Three Stooges rolled into one person and they're all vying for attention! Mike rambled a bit about the night and then said, "Moving right along, which is kind of what we have to do," and then brought on the first act, Ramblin' Rhode.

Timmy May played guitar, sang and was accompanied by a young woman named Jamie on fiddle. Together they made up Ramblin' Rhode and played original songs — one about going to MerleFest, another about Newports' Jim McGrath — and also managed to squeeze a third into their 10-minute slot. Timmy May is well known at the Fast Net Sessions in Newport, and his material had a traditional and old-timey feel to it.

Next up was David Deprest. He thanked Fischman for the wonderful introduction and to that Mike exclaimed, "You wrote it, not me!" Deprest mentioned that he was local and that he actually walked to the gig. He sang a couple of songs from his current CD, titled *Grandma's Car*, starting with the title track that had the refrain "going down to Nashville in my Grandma's car." He told the audience, in case they were wondering, that it was a true story and it was a 2000 Toyota Corolla. His next number was "My Heart Is Like My Guitar." Overall Deprest's mini set showed confidence, though there seemed to be a little nervousness underlying.

Jamestown's Ed McGuirl, who often performs with MC Fischman, began his set with laughter after his bio claimed that he would be "a rich and famous folk musician if it wasn't an oxymoron." His socially conscious "Tomorrow's Not Too Soon," performed with guitar and rack harmonica, was followed by the historical and sometimes hysterical song about Roger Williams, "Don't Forget Your Hat," played on mandolin. He noted that they were historical facts that he made up, just like what is happening in this country now.

The quiet and quirky Kate Mick followed. Mick accompanies herself on banjo and announced that her first song was about the moon "which is full tonight." She kept on plucking and her second song was a stream of consciousness number about which she said, "See if you can understand it."

Jon Dember and his ukuleles were next. Dember claimed that he was an "armchair songwriter," but his songs had very clever lyrics and hooks. One was not only funny, but was socially conscious and dealt with sea level rise and the banking crisis and had the chorus "haddock in the attic." At one point he was swinging his hips and went into a short rendition of "Octopus's Garden" by the Beatles. In honor of V-Day, he also played a love song called "Don't Ask Why." Though he was not a polished player, his set was quite enjoyable.

Mike Fischman took the stage and announced that it was time for intermission and the raffle drawing. Folks grabbed a snack from the kitchen and waited and hoped that their ticket would be drawn. During this time, the next act, a full band, Anthony Loffredio and Barn-Burning, were setting up.

Loffredio played guitar, sang and was backed by Barn Burning's players on lap steel, bass and drums. He mentioned they would be performing a couple of "Don't" songs and that would "tell you what not to do tonight." Anthony apologized that they were playing as a band and said, "I was going to be a solo, but everyone was going to be around!" The band had a sound that was a little bit Psychedelic Furs and a little bit of The Cure.

Singer-songwriter John McDaid had the audience singing "gotta make an effort if you wanna turn a profit" to his cleverly written original composition. Another made reference to "mango Mussolini" and had the refrain "lost in translation." He seemed to have won them over with his lyrics.

Newport's Malerie Day sat, legs crossed, on a stool, quietly sang and played finger picked guitar for her set. She performed a song "In Time" and another, possibly from her current EP.

Russell Bailey was dressed in black from the cap on his head to the shoes on his feet. His guitar was the only visual break from the blackness. He told the audience that his compositions were born out of traditions and troubadours. His first number took place in a German cafe and parts of it were sung in German. Bailey introduced his second song, "Velvet Robe," as being a bit Chicago Blues by way of New Orleans.

The last act of the evening was Old School Pickers, who are based around the duo Flowers and Rain (Greg Ferriera-guitar/vocals and Cassie Minto-fiddle) with the addition of Paul Murphy on bass and Laura Hart on vocals. Murphy told the audience how 50 years ago he was in this very room at a dance

and went next door to the little store and that is where he met his future wife. The quartet closed the competition with “Fisherman’s Blues” by The Waterboys with Minto capturing the violin riff of the original version.

Overall the audience seem to enjoy every act. They were all warmly and enthusiastically rewarded with ambitious applause. All were asked to make their selection on a ballot and to turn them in to the volunteers. After a short interlude of song (and comic relief) by Mike Fischman and Ed McGuirl, the ballots were collected and tallied. Erin commented how some folks were so passionate about the process that they checked off all the names on the sheet while others used a point system or highlighted their favorites with stars.

Starting with third place she announced Old School Pickers had claimed that position. Second place went to Russell Bailey and first prize was awarded to John McDaide. All of the participants received CFM gift certificates. The top three were given nicely framed certificates, and John McDaid scored himself a new ukulele for his first place finish.

Young declared the evening a huge success and expressed hope that this would be the first of many “Community Hoots” to come. At the formal close of the hoot, an open session began where anyone who wanted to play could. A circle of chairs replaced the long tables in the room and slowly musicians filled the seats and joined in with the others.

Erin has done a great job with what she has created in her time at Common Fence. I certainly hope that what she has worked hard to institute continues after she retires from her position at the end of this season.

If you would like to know more about Common Fence Music, picket on over to [commonfencemusic.org](http://commonfencemusic.org)

Please check out photos from the “Community Hoot” on the Motif Facebook page at [fb.com/MotifRI](https://fb.com/MotifRI)  
That’s it for now. Thanks for reading. [www.JohnFuzek.com](http://www.JohnFuzek.com)

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## He's No Good: But Ms. Ronstadt sure is

Okee dokee folks... I don't know what to say right now. The Republican Senate is now an accomplice to every crime Trump has committed and surely will commit. Come November, you all must remember what has happened. We need to save this country from the cult of Trump. Hang onto the anger, but spread it far and wide and use it in November! Read on...

I think that every male of my age had a crush on Linda Ronstadt in the '70s. Though Ronstadt is no longer able to perform, tribute acts are keeping her songs alive. One such act, The Linda Ronstadt Experience, will be at The Met on February 14. If you want to spend your V-Day singing along to "You're No Good," "Poor, Poor Pitiful Me" or "When Will I Be Loved" then this is the place for you! Biscuit City opens the show. Coming up the next night at The Met are The Mallet Brothers with Celtic punk band The Pourmen. On Leap Year Day, February 29, that gal with a guitar Ana Popovic will show you how it's done. For more, "Blue Bayou" to themetri.com

When the post Valentine's show The Love Hangover was conceived 20 years ago, I am not quite sure this is what they had in mind. I have the feeling that it was more cynical in nature. Every year on February 15 musicians sing, usually in duets, about love's trials and tribulations at this morning-after (actually evening-after) music marathon. The 2020 version at The Columbus Theatre is described as "Lovelorn, love torn, Love sworn duets for the day after." The dynamic duos slated for this year's show are: Tai and Moon Boo City acoustic, Sara Azriel, The 'Mericans, John Faraone & Mountainess, Chrissy Stewart, Allysen & Ava Callery, Cardboard Ox, Anthony Loffredio & Jodie Treloar Sampson, Rachel Blumberg & Jane Hesser, Ms. Erma Jean So Fly, Michelle Cruz and the Illuminated States, Helen & The Trash Pandas, Stev Delmonico, Silverteeth, Tall, Artist Jackie, Medusa Black, Twin Goat, Maddy Black, Cliff Wood & Ben Pell, Christian Caldarone & Annie Jaehnig. For more, find what light through yonder window breaks at columbustheatre.com

One of the respites from all of this Trump crap is comedy, and one of my favorite comedians is Marc Maron. If you do not know his comedy, you may know him from his role on the Netflix series "GLOW," "The Marc Maron Show," his podcast "WTF" or his brief appearance in the film *Joker*. His brand of honest and thought-provoking comedy is what we all need about now. Maron will be at the Columbus Theatre on Friday, February 21. You don't want to miss this! For more, Thinky Pain to columbustheatre.com

Have you ever been "Tempted"? Felt like "Pulling Muscles From A Shell"? Had "Black Coffee In Bed" or thought that you were too "Cool For Cats"? If the answer to these is a resounding "YES," then you owe it to yourself to get to The Vets on Sunday, February 23. Starting in the late '70s, Squeeze began to provide the airwaves and MTV with some of the most memorable music to make it to the US from the UK. I had a chance to talk with Chris Difford, who with Glenn Tilbrook was responsible for most of

Squeeze's songs. Read that interview at [motifri.com/difford](http://motifri.com/difford). For more about Squeeze at Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Providence, "Slap and Tickle" to [thevetsri.com](http://thevetsri.com)

I am running out of room so here are a few more for you all! Singer-Songwriter Jan Luby will be releasing her new CD, *Night Window*, at 3pm on February 9 at The Mediator Stage, 50 Rounds Ave in PVD. There will be a CD celebration party following the show and refreshments will be served! Pay what you can ([Facebook.com/MediatorStage](https://www.facebook.com/MediatorStage)).

Sandywoods Center for the Arts invites you to listen to silly love songs and enjoy a treat from the chocolate bar when they present Chocolate and Silly Love Songs on February 14. Serenading you into a chocolate coma will be Spare Change, Victoria Ferland, David Conlon, Gary Fish, Mike O'Dwyer, and Steven Redfern ([sandywoodsmusic.com](http://sandywoodsmusic.com)).

The Rhode Island Songwriters Association presents their monthly Songwriter Showcase on Saturday, February 15. This edition features The Lied To's, Steve Volkmann and Peter Maricle and is held at the Brooklyn Coffee, Tea & Guest House, 209 Douglas Ave in PVD ([risongwriters.com](http://risongwriters.com)).

The Event Center at Twin River will be rocking in February. The American Band Grandfunk Railroad with opener The Guess Who hits the stage on the 8th. Collective Soul will "Shine" on February 14. And Melissa Etheridge as well as Blood, Sweat and Tears are also on the casino's upcoming schedule ([twinriver.com](http://twinriver.com)). An Open Mic for Poetry and the Written Word, hosted by Debra Lilli, will take place on Thursday, February 27, from 6 - 9pm at Bricks Restaurant, 641 Atwood Ave in Cranston. All are welcome.

That's it for now. Dump Trump 2020! Thanks for reading. [JohnFuzek.com](http://JohnFuzek.com)

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## [An Interview with Squeeze's Chris Difford](#)

Okee dokee folks... Have you ever been "Tempted"?, felt like "Pulling Muscles From A Shell"?, had "Black Coffee In Bed"?, or thought that you were too "Cool For Cats"? If the answer to these is a resounding "YES" then you owe it to yourself to get to Vets on Sunday, February 23. Starting in the late '70s Squeeze began to provide the airwaves and MTV with some of the most memorable music to make it to US from the UK. I had a chance to talk with Chris Difford, who with Glenn Tilbrook, was

responsible for most of Squeeze's songs.

John Fuzek: Hi, are you there? Just checking...I am all confused, I had to punch in about 30 digits to make this call!

Chris Difford: (laughs) It's a conundrum...well, here we are!

JF: You're at Greenwich Mean Time, you are at the center of where time revolves.

CD: Well, you could say center of the universe I guess.

JF: Where are you, London?

CD: I am on the South Coast, where are you?

JF: Rhode Island, I am in the colonies.

CD: (laughs) Those were the days.

JF: I was actually called a colonist a few times when I was in England. So, your tour that is coming up will keep you on the road for months, correct?

CD: Well, there's nothing new there, Squeeze are a touring animal these days, we seem to tour an awful lot which is kind of good in a way because people want to hear the songs and we want to play them so it's a good combination.

JF: You are performing the Songbook Show this time around, the hits and a few, choice deep cuts?

CD: That's exactly right, yeah, we play hits and we play deep cuts too and that's what people will appreciate.

JF: You have your latest album, *The Knowledge*, when did that come out? I gave it a listen just before I called you.

CD: Two years ago now.

JF: One of the songs, "The Ones", had a line in it "the fake news keeps coming", can you tell me about that?

CD: Well, that was one of Glenn's lines, really, I think that Glenn has very astutely joined some of his lyrical ideas with mine and we just picked up on one of his, which is great.

JF: Is it a reference to the current political atmosphere?

CD: I don't know, you'd have to ask him, he is more political than I am, so it's hard to say but he has a very apt hand about putting his point across. We are in a very difficult time, obviously, for many reasons around the world, and sometimes it's good to express your point of view about those things in songs because that's what people like to hear, when it's done right it makes sense I think.

JF: So, you primarily write the lyrics for Squeeze songs, correct?

CD: For the past 12 albums, yes, definitely.

JF: What is your process? I am a songwriter as well and I am always curious about another writer's process, especially since you cowrite with Glenn.

CD: When I have the time to stand still, or sit still, as a lyricist I just sit at my desk and hope for the best, and see what ideas come to me, luckily things normally turn up, interesting and different stories come into my head, lots of different parts of my imagination, but these days trying to find the time to write are golden moments and it's quite rare, whereas when I was a kid there was nothing else to do but write songs, you'd just sit around all day writing lyrics with a pen and a piece of paper, but in this modern world things are coming so quickly you don't get a chance to stop spinning.

JF: What I do is I always have note cards and constantly write notes, lines, lyrical ideas and such, often when I am driving, do you do that as well?

CD: I do keep notes and usually ideas come to me later in the day and what I tend to do is try to remember them for the following day. If I can remember them the following day then they were worth remembering, and if they weren't then they are gone forever, I like to tease myself, it's good for the

memory.

JF: So, you actually started the band by putting up a note that you were looking for a guitar player for a band that didn't actually exist, is that right?

CD: That's correct, I did that...I was looking for someone to come together with...I never imagined that that would be the person I would spend my entire life working with, it was one of those very special moments.

JF: I basically did the same thing and just celebrated 30 years a couple of months ago.

CD: Congratulations, that's amazing.

JF: How long have you and Glenn been working together, 40?

CD: 47

JF: Wow, that's great!... You have a very interesting voice, I really like it, it is the lower register voice that we hear on the albums

CD: Yes, I can scrape the barnacles off a boat with my voice.

JF: (laughs) I like the combination your two voices (Glenn & Chris), it is a really interesting mix, that's the signature Squeeze vocal sound, that blend, it's very original and I like that.

CD: Yeah, I like it and I have grown to like it even more as the years unfold, I am very fortunate, I was very flippant when I was a kid and expected whatever to happen and whatever did happen and had that kind of thinking, but my, God, that was amazing.

JF: I took a couple of questions from my readers and someone wanted to know if you remember playing at the original Lupo's?

CD: I remember the name, but I can't remember the venue off the top of my head, but I can remember playing, probably 1979...we were playing up and down the coast there.

JF: On the latest album there is a song called "Elmer's End" that is the last song on the disc, it's an instrumental. That's an interesting way to end an album, how did that one come about?

CD: You will have to talk with Glenn about that one because he devised that piece of music, there are no lyrics for it so it remains an instrumental...he's kind of lost in his own space creating wonderful music...he can take melodies and his music is ultra-intelligent, I think. If we were to have an instrumental album that would have that kind of melodic movement would be just awesome. He has the ability to do strange stuff like that.

JF: It's a very somber piece.

CD: It is, it is a bit of a slow march, but I suppose at that point of the album that is where our heads were at, but I didn't actually play on it, it was all of Glenn's.

JF: You run song retreats, do you do them just in the UK or in US as well?

CD: They are mainly in the UK, but I am looking to do a couple in America, maybe Nashville but there's already lots of songwriters. I am looking for the right venue to do a songwriting workshop and to invite people along, so I guess it will come but this is such a busy year, with Hall and Oates and our own shows there's really not enough time to breathe.

JF: You have the tour with Hall and Oates and KT Tunstall, you've got a Scot, the American and the Brits!

CD: (laughs) Yeah, I went to see Hall and Oates last summer, and I was blown away how many hit songs they had, it's just incredible, it was a great show, they have an amazing band, I think with them and KT, we have already played with KT...she is amazing.

JF: I have not seen her yet, I have seen you a few times and Hall and Oates as well, that should be an amazing tour, that seems like it will be one of the hottest tickets this summer...so, there is a reference to cheese sandwiches on your website, what does that mean???

CD: Well, two pieces of bread with a bit of cheese in it...who knows...

JF: I thought cheese toast with Lee & Perrins was the big thing out there

CD: Exactly...I love it... cheese toast is amazing! I am a cheese entrepreneur!

JF: Anything else that you want to add about the show coming up, we're almost out of time? This is just Squeeze, right, or is there an opening act? I don't think that I saw one listed.

CD: I don't have my notes in front of me, but I am looking forward to coming back to that part of the world. We're just packing our bags and getting ready now to head out there, yeah.

JF: Well, I have to say that I love the band and have seen you many times, though it has been a while since the last time, my own gigs get in the way a lot.

CD: Well, come out to the show and bring everybody that you can!

JF: Anything else that you would like to add? My friend Ken is next up to talk with you. Tell him that you told John everything and you have nothing left to say! (laughs)

CD: (laughs) This has been great, thanks for your time.

JF: Thanks, take care!

*For more about Squeeze at Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Providence on Sunday, February 23, "Slap and Tickle" to [thevetsri.com](http://thevetsri.com) That's it for now. Thanks for reading. [JohnFuzek.com](http://JohnFuzek.com)*

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## **And Now for Something Completely Different: John Cleese talks about decades of making us laugh**

Okee dokee folks... Back in the early '70s, I was part of the first very fortunate generation of Americans that discovered "Monty Python's Flying Circus" on late night TV. It was the funniest and most original program that I had ever seen. My friends and I would watch it whenever we could and recreate the routines and accents for days after. I remember my high school showing *And Now For Something Completely Different* in the auditorium on a rare after school movie night. When *Monty Python and The Holy Grail* came out we, of course, HAD to see it. How could a Monty Python film about the odyssey of King Arthur in search of the Holy Grail not be side splitting? That was 45 years ago, and that film is still as funny, if not funnier, as the day it debuted. A few years ago I attended a screening of that film with a post film Q&A with one of the Pythons, John Cleese. I wasn't sure how something like that would be, but it wound up being one of the funniest shows I have ever attended. It had been decades since I had seen *Holy Grail* in a theater with a crowd of people. Not only was it a nostalgic experience the film seemed funnier than ever! The icing on that night was John Cleese. He took the stage after the film, answered questions and told stories. Just to be in the same room as a member of Monty Python was amazing, let alone to be regaled Monty Python anecdotes that were hysterical. I thought this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but it seems that the once-in-a-lifetime gods are being generous and it is happening AGAIN! John Cleese is bringing *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* to Veterans Performing Arts Center on Sunday, February 16 and will once again spin his post picture "Python-ical" yarns. I had the EXTREME honor to talk with Cleese by phone last week.

John Cleese: Hello, John! now that's easy to remember!

John Fuzek: It is, thank you for taking the time to talk with me.

JC: Thank you for taking the time to help me sell tickets!

JF: My pleasure. I saw you last time you came to town and to me, it was like seeing one of the Beatles!

JC: (laughs) What a lovely thing to say! We've discovered over the years we have had some extraordinarily famous fans, Elvis Presley used to sit in bed doing Python sketches with his wife if you can believe that. Barry Manilow is a huge fan, but we're most proud of the fact that John Lennon once said he'd rather have been a Python than a Beatle! Very touched by these tributes and it's funny because we always had great difficulty persuading TV and film executives to put us on the screen, but we never had any problem getting fans among the very talented artistic people. Tells you a lot about the structure of the business.

JF: True! I know you have done this tour with the *Holy Grail* film a couple of times, but why don't you tour with *Life of Brian* or *Meaning of Life*? Those would be great for this format.

JC: I agree with you 100%. I'd love to tour with *Life of Brian* in particular, I think that that would be very interesting indeed, but the fact is that these shows are put on by promoters and promoters don't want to lose money, and they know that Americans love *Holy Grail*. But if we were doing it in England, it probably would be *Life of Brian* because that is the Python film that the British like best. I think that the most interesting one would be *Life of Brian* because of all the questions it raises about what is religion and what isn't religion.

JF: Especially these days with all the religious fundamentalists in the US.

JC: Fundamentalism seems to be taking over in every way, you know, authoritarian people are 100% sure that they're right and anyone that disagrees with them are bad people. This is not a good time in world history.

JF: No, it is not. I like to get political in my columns and I know that you have been vocally opposed to Trump over the years. One of the things that you said was, "He doesn't trust anyone in charge of

democracy” and it’s ironic that he is in charge of a democracy.

JC: Yes, it’s extraordinary that when talking about Russian interference in the American election that he would take the word of the Russian president over the testimony of his intelligence agencies. If you put that in a Python sketch, no one would believe it!

JF: No, they wouldn’t. I also saw a but where you compared him to a pro wrestler and that was the whole concept of the movie *Idiocracy*, which is basically what we are living now

JC: What I said about pro wrestling, is when I first went to pro wrestling I was struck by two things: one is what superb athletes they are, and the second is what dreadful actors they are. And what astounded me was about 40% of the people sitting in the hall watching the wrestling thought it was for real. If they can’t see it when it’s under their own noses, if they can’t see the terrible acting and the facts that things are quite clearly orchestrated, they think it’s real. I always say to the people when they charge the wrestling people with not having enough doctors in the corner the defense was it’s a scripted entertainment. That is what they said in court, and if you can’t see it’s phony when it’s right under your nose, how can you explain to anyone that it’s phony and that’s what I feel about Trump.

JF: That is why we are in the situation that we are in!

JC: Exactly, it’s just extraordinary, I don’t know if it’s a failure of education or what, but i think one of the problems is that people get more and more and more anxious because the human being is basically a conservative, with a small “c”, conservative creature. If you look at what causes stress and what causes stress is change. If things stay the same, people don’t get so stressed. Well, the world is changing very fast. In the old days, people had periods of quiet when they would, oh, I don’t know, take the dog for a walk or go fishing or just go out and play around, kind of aimless fun. Now everybody’s so focused and the phone calls are coming in. Nobody has any down time in which to process their emotions. So if something upsetting happened in the old days, people must just sit on the porch or just wander around a bit and just process it. Now nobody has time to do that because the phone is ringing, that makes people both irritable or angry and it makes them anxious, and the more anxious people get the more they don’t like uncertainty and assume that anyone that doesn’t agree with them is a bad person. Oh, it’s an absolute nightmare!

JF: Do you think that if Monty Python had been a comedy troupe in the Middle Ages would you have all been beheaded?

JC: Oh, yes, of course we would have been! We would have been lucky if we’d been beheaded. It would

have probably taken them a lot longer than that (laughs). Yes, if you look now, for example, at *Life of Brian*, the conversation that they have at the amphitheater, Stan wanting the right to have a baby, that was 40 years ago we wrote that and now it's on the front pages of the papers every day. It's quite extraordinary.

JF: Do you live in the US or the UK or both?

JC: I don't really live anywhere at the moment. I left the UK in disgust about 18 months ago. My main course of disgust was the Tory government and Theresa May. So I just left. I don't want to live in this country anymore. But because my job requires an immense amount of travel, I don't really have a home now. My wife and I have a flat in London, but I visit it very seldom. What I am really looking for is a place in the sun, possibly in the Mediterranean on a little island where I can sit in the sun, which makes me feel much better than when I am cold and wet, and observe the world going mad from a safe distance (laughs).

JF: That's the smart thing to do, I don't blame you! So, I watched the last Monty Python O2 show from London, I know people always ask about reunions. I know it will never happen again, both Terrys are dealing with dementia, correct? (Note, this interview was just days before Terry Jones' death.)

JC: Well, right, Terry Jones is and Terry Gilliam hasn't mentioned it yet, but he's been dealing with dementia for about 40 years, so I don't think anything has changed.

JF: Those 10 shows should have pleased any Python fan forever.

JC: I said to people when they would ask me about it before, it's not really a show. Because how many times have you ever been to a show where the audience knows the words better than the actors do? It just doesn't happen. So what was happening was an event. It was a celebration. They were coming to say thank you for making us laugh over the years and we were saying, "Well, thanks for coming to thank us!" There was so much affection in the audience, that you felt, well, we were comedians and may not be terribly useful. But if we can bring this kind of contentment and affection to large groups of people we are actually doing a useful job, especially at the moment.

JF: Didn't people know the words when you first started touring with Python?

JC: No, that happened much later. If you listen to some of the most successful sketches like the silly



walks for example, there's not that amount of laughter on the original tape. But I think what happened is we started doing the stage shows, which was not for about five years. When we started doing the stage shows, that's when people began to come up to us and be able to do the dialogue because I'd always thought how lucky singers were because you can sing a great song and then people want to hear it immediately again, and encore. But if you tell a joke and then tell the joke again (laughs), the second time round the joke doesn't get much laughter, and people knew the lyrics of songs and suddenly they knew the words of sketches. I don't know when it all started but I think it's when we started touring.

JF: Well, I have been a fan for 45 years, or maybe more, I am part of the initial crew that was turned onto Python in the early '70s, so I've been a fan for a long time

JC: That's lovely, that's lovely to hear, and I have to say that Python fans are very nice people because they have a sense of humor and they don't take things too seriously and they're never aggressive. They're just very nice, relaxed people, so going in front of audiences is a genuine pleasure. I went off and did one of those dates at Comiccon where you sign and everyone said it would be so boring, but it wasn't because the people I was dealing with they were delightful and that gives you energy.

JF: How much longer will you keep doing this? You are going to be 81 this year?

JC: I am writing some things. In two weeks time I go to a small provincial theatre in the southwest of England to see a play of mine that is being rehearsed, and then it's going on a 10-week tour. I've never done that, so I am looking forward to that. I am also about to work on a stage version of *Life of Brian*, and I am working with my daughter. Camilla will be on stage with me, shepherding the questions at the performance. She and I are working on a musical of *Fish Called Wanda*, so I think I will continue to do a lot of writing until I die, but I don't think I can do the touring. Although the shows are lovely, the act of touring is very tiring. Someone was talking about doing a residency in NYC, and if you're in one city you just go to the theater in the evening for two hours and that's not exhausting,

JF: I would go to NY for that!

JC: Well I hope that it happens!

JF: I don't want to take up, well, I would love to take up more of your time, I would love to talk with you for hours but I think our time is up

JC: Well, come to the performance and we will have a bit of a gossip on condition that you ask me a very rude question during the Q&A!

JF: I will do that! thanks for the chat!

JC: (laughs) I can't hear you very well there is a helicopter going over... but it's fading away now...

JF: I will see you on February 16, thank you!

Monty Python and the Holy Grail with John Cleese will be at Veterans Performing Arts Center on Sunday, February 16. For more, silly walk to [TheVetsRI.com](http://TheVetsRI.com). That's it for now. Thanks for reading. [JohnFuzek.com](http://JohnFuzek.com)