

Check on Your Venues!: Struggling spots can use your help

Okee dokee folks... I sincerely hope that none of you reading this are getting complacent about COVID-19. It is far from over. You still need to wear a mask and social distance. Please do not listen to the mango moron; he is as dangerous as he is stupid and we need to fire him in November to get back to a time when science, facts and intelligence were the norm.

I would like to commend the folks who have been out there protesting. It is making a difference. Please don't relent, but please stay safe. There is so much more that needs to change. We have to look at life differently now and that is hard for some people. Humans need to evolve — evolution aids survival.

The pandemic has decimated the music industry, and definitely has affected me personally. My life revolves around music, and it has been almost four months since I have played a gig. I hadn't touched a guitar at all during this time until just the other night when my band got together for an outdoor rehearsal. I REALLY needed that. The depression of having all the work I put into booking shows, rehearsing, and writing all come to a screeching halt hit me hard. When the pandemic began my neighbors wanted me to play a backyard concert for them. I said that I would but still haven't. It is a good idea though. House concerts were quite popular in the pre-pandemic days so maybe this summer can be the summer of backyard concerts? You really don't need much sound reinforcement, if any, to do this kind of show. Sit around a fire pit and play music. Does anyone remember the commercial for Campfire Girls in the 60's? "Sing around the campfire, join the Campfire Girls" Google it! Now it will be stuck in your head for 50 years! Of course you will still have to social distance and wear a mask but don't fight it, just accept it. Seriously, choose your your battles wisely.

While some bars and restaurants are beginning to have music, mostly outdoors, the main music venues are still closed. Some venues might be closed for good. If you have a favorite venue, you may want to check in with them. Many are doing fundraisers to stay alive. Some are getting creative, like the Galactic Theatre in Warren (galactictheatre.com). They are selling ICE CREAM through the front door. If you are in that neighborhood you can stop by for a cool, tasty treat. Some, such as Common Fence Music (commonfencemusic.org) and The Narrows Center for the Arts (narrowscenter.org), are doing regular live internet streams. Pumphouse Music Works (pumphousemusicworks.com) has a GoFundMe campaign running and director Dan Collins notes, "We are in the midst of finalizing our reopening plans, which include an outdoor stage and service area. The costs of these upgrades, in addition to everyday expenses of keeping the lights on and mortgage paid, put us in the unenviable position of asking for your financial help." To donate, visit: gofundme.com/f/pump-house-music-works-needs-your-help The Greenwich Odeum sent out an e-mail with some positive news, "We have been anxiously waiting to reopen our doors... Our staff has been working hard these past few months to figure out ways that we can keep the Odeum safe for all of our patrons, volunteers, artists and employees and we look

forward to sharing our plan with you in the coming weeks, along with some exciting programming!" The National Independent Venue Association has a website committed to collect signatures in support of music venues like the aforementioned. Please visit the site and add your name (saveourstages.com)!

In the meantime, you can still find most musicians doing livestreams. Check your favorite musician's Facebook page or website. Local legend and fav, Juxo, has been doing his "Live From The Practice Space" series with special guests on Monday nights (facebook.com/johnjuxo). My band, Forever Young, will be doing a livestream sometime soon. We had so much fun playing music in the backyard last week we want to share it with you. We just want to do it right. We are working on getting proper video and sound techs secured to do so. Check our page for news ForeverYoungNeilYoungTribute.com

New protest songs are beginning to blossom and hopefully music will once again use whatever influence it can on society. The (Dixie) Chicks, who are known for speaking their minds, just released "March, March" from their album *Gaslighter*. I have an anti Trump song that I wrote a few months back but the pandemic got in the way of recording it. If you have a protest song/anti-Trump song I would love to know about it.

That's it for now. Thanks for reading. JohnFuzek.com #DumpTrump2020!!!

[Summer Guide: The road to nowhere...](#)

I was telling my friend Louie that I had to write a music summer guide and he responded, "Guide to what?" Good question, damned if I know. Maybe the best songs to listen to at the beach? That list for local music always starts with Neutral Nation's "Bad Music Beach" with honorable mention to Someday Providence's "Summertime in Rhode Island." Technically there is still The Mummies at Askew on August 23, but you'd get better odds at Twin River on roulette than whether that show happens. Sammy Hagar said live music should return to save the economy. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the benefit of his kids and grandkids. It makes sense. He had no problem sacrificing Van Halen. So ... fuck him, I can drive 55. Black Lives Matter. Here are some new tunes to crank up like the fireworks in the middle of the night.

Bob Mould – "American Crisis" (Merge Records)

Bob Dylan is the best lyricist in the history of rock 'n' roll. He even has a lyrically stunning new album out but, with all respect to Mr. Zimmerman and his chart-topping 17 minute song, he's not the Bob who came out of Minneapolis that the world needs now. I saw Mould solo in January in Fall River and he talked about coming of age as a gay male in the '80s, when the emerging AIDS crisis was referred to as "the gay cancer."

"American Crisis" starts off with this lyric: "To come of age in the '80s was bad enough, we were marginalized and demonized, I watched a lot of my generation die." And he is just getting started. "Wake up every day to see a nation in flames, we click and we tweet and we spread these tales of blame ... world turning darker everyday, in a fucked up USA." This song makes it feel like he was phoning it in with his old band, Husker Du, on *Zen Arcade*. *Zen Arcade* was one of the best records of the '80s. In under two and half minutes Mould and bandmates Jason Narducy and Jon Wurster power through more twists and turns than the Corkscrew at Rocky Point. In the fadeout Mould chants, "Silence was death, never forget." Yes. And vote!

steadystate — *Fast Machine*

I loved steadystate's debut EP, *Two Moons*, last year mostly because of the track, "Radiation," which exemplified great electro-alternative '80s rock 'n' roll. It took a while to appreciate the followup, *Fast Machine*, because it was kind of like going from Bowie's *Diamond Dogs* to *Low*. *Fast Machine* is trippy in both a psychedelic and melancholy manner, kind of like the times. I recommend checking out Tyna Calderone's (from Big Haired Sluts fame) video for the first single "Slider," which was shot in Providence right after the shutdown on their social media. Singer/Keyboardist Christian Calderon ponders whether "our nightmares will come alive, or will they clean up everything." The title track asks, "What's the point of no return?" while the band paints a foggy '80s electro-influenced wall of sound. The final track, "D+," isn't just my high school math grade, it starts slow till squalls of feedback usher in the beat. *Fast Machine* is the perfect EP to blast at the beach to chill between New Order and Jesus Jones.

Malyssa BellaRosa — *Affinity*

Malyssa BellaRosa has been a busy lady between this solo album and another record she's ready to drop with her band, Sugar Cones. I was expecting a more mellow album in the vein of "these songs didn't work with the band" type of thing, but *Affinity* ain't afraid of a little rocking and a rolling. The opening, "Great Escape," starts with BellaRosa's smoky vocals that leads the listener into the titanic chorus about the need to get away. "All Used Up" is a tune that BellaRosa has done with one of her other bands, Malyssa and The Liberators. I can't say it is my favorite, but I get why it sticks around — when the song goes into the rocking part surfing a killer hook, I get the appeal. "Wanting More" reminds me of Bonnie Tyler with strings. As a huge fan of Jim Steinman's songwriting, I love this! It only works because BellaRosa has the pipes to pull this off. "By My Side" has the neo-'60s garage strut reminiscent

of Edwyn Collins "A Girl Like You." "It's Alright" is dirty guitar punk rock rave up. The closing "Groove With Me" is a meditative electro jam to fall asleep to on the beach under the stars.

Sick Pills – *Late Night Death Trip* (75orLess records)

Got this biscuit in the mail and after glancing at the song titles, I had to reach out to singer/guitarist Chris (Dr. Evil) Guaraldi to make sure he was okay. The song titles include "Wanna Die," "Waiting To Die" and the title track. It turns out it was inspired by some health problems last year, including a late night ambulance trip. Thankfully Dr. Evil is doing better, and from the suffering came great art. The frantic opener, "Wanna Die" rips in a Husker Du pace before settling into a late '90s breakdown. "One More Chance For Love" is another punk rave-up with a hook that recalls early The Replacements. "Waiting To Die" reminds me of '90s The Queers and is infectious as hell – seriously, wear a face mask while listening. The title track has the frenetic backbeat like Funhouse-era Stooges, but at the same time, sounds nothing like them all. The CD version rounds out with a Devo cover in "Gates of Steel" and Q Lazzarus' "Goodbye Horses" that was featured in *Silence of the Lambs*. *Late Night Death Trip* is the album to crank at the beach when one has had too much tequila the night before.

Blackletter – *Animal Farm*

Singer/Keyboardist Dave Laros told me this record was a reflection of the times and is his effort to make sense of it all. The release party for *Animal Farm* was to be the week everything shut down, so if the times were weird before, good luck with the next one, Laros. *Animal Farm* starts off with a '70s rock strut with bassist Rob Shaggs holding down the low end before guitarist Vic Foley unleashes a bomb of guitar pyrotechnics on the title track that rival anything in Providence at 2am these days. "Vlad The Impaler" reminds me a lot of Blue Oyster Cult when they are not being sweet and singing about the Grim Reaper. "Murder on the Run" is my favorite on the album with Foley's blues licks playing against Laros' keyboards till the chorus that kicks any other power ballad to the curb. "Better Rain" reminds me of a cross between '70s stoner rock and Kilgore Smudge. "Invisible Chains / The Waltz" has the title backward because it starts off with a waltz before undergoing a metamorphosis into early Queen at a freak show. *Animal Farm* is the record to put on the ghetto blaster at the beach for those who apply 110 SPF and ... it's not enough.

Email music news to mclarkin33@gmail.com

[The Road to Reopening: How are local music venues going to handle Phase III?](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dusk will be updating their [Facebook page](#) regularly as their plans take shape.

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

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

[Rough and Rowdy Ways: After 60 years, Bob Dylan has started to open up](#)



It's comforting to know that at 79 years old, Bob Dylan is pissed. A true American soldier, a wordsmith smitten with pugilism. An old, wealthy man who seems to be viscerally and cerebrally aware of the plight of people stricken with poverty and affected by boiling racial tensions; Bob Dylan is an anomaly because he is telling the truth.

Rough and Rowdy Ways, Dylan's first album of original material since 2012's *Tempest*, comes at a time of fright and uncertainty in the world. Dylan boldly addresses death and injustice in the long, pop-culture-reference filled, "Murder Most Foul," which is a commentary on the very public assassination of then sitting president John F. Kennedy and the shady coverup surrounding his murder. Dylan spends 17 somber minutes painting a vast and detailed account of the climate in the nation and popular culture leading up to Kennedy's assassination, and segues into shading in the feelings of the changing political climate and the shift of culture following the president's death. Dylan includes a wide range of references from the Everly Brothers' fictional "Little Suzie" and Larry William's (also fictional) "Dizzy Miss Lizzy" to Abraham Zapruder, whose 8mm film of the assassination is probably the most widely viewed footage of JFK's murder. In what seems to be a desperate midnight prayer to Wolfman Jack, Dylan begs to hear John Lee Hooker, the Eagles, Etta James, the Allman Brothers, Nat King Cole and Junior Wells, and to see silver screen legends Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd, to name a few. The

breadth of the pool of knowledge that Dylan draws from knows no bounds. Dylan conveys the desperation and sharply pointed sadness that was bestowed on America when the president of the people was murdered in broad daylight in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963.

Dylan's band on the record is his top-notch touring group Tony Garnier (bass guitar), multi-instrumentalist Donnie Herron (pedal steel guitar, violin accordion), both Charlie Sexton and Bob Britt on guitar and Matt Chamberlain plays the drums. Benmont Tench, formerly of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, and jazz artist Alan Pasqua provide the organ and piano work. Blake Mills and Fiona Apple are also credited, seemingly providing the spacey backing vocals that bob and weave throughout the album. Dylan injects his winding and wiry guitar playing, as well as some harmonica work, which has become increasingly bluesier over recent years.

The tour infamously dubbed "the Never Ending Tour" is on hold for the longest period since its inception in 1988, and "I've Made Up My Mind to Give Myself to You" reads like an ode to the road that has harbored Dylan so graciously, particularly for the last 32 years of his career. He made up his mind to give himself to his fans and the road after a tumultuous stretch of career in the '80s during which Dylan himself admits that he had been written off as a 'has-been' and was washed up.

Since then, he's upheld his decision to give himself away with 14 album releases (not to mention numerous extensive releases of previously unreleased material and live recordings), the first installment of his memoir, *Chronicles*, a few authorized documentaries, and over 3,000 tour dates performed since '88. His work has not gone unrecognized as he's earned seven Grammy wins, an Oscar for the song "Things Have Changed," the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama and 2016 Nobel Peace Prize in literature.

"Goodbye Jimmy Reed" is the upbeat highlight of the album with collectively bold guitar performances from Charlie Sexton, Bob Britt and Dylan that drive Dylan's lyrical search for a simpler time that he admits isn't *better*, but simply, more simple. Dylan's harmonica playing is sweet and clear and reminiscent of Little Walter; Dylan once said "rock n roll died when Little Walter died." Emitting the same cool late-night juke-joint feeling of "Goodbye Jimmy Reed," "Crossing the Rubicon" is arguably the best song on the album; Dylan brags about his experience and showcases his bravado, but remains skeptical of the whole thing, giving us a rare glimpse into the state of his creative being and reminding us that his mind is ever mossy.

If you're looking for *Blood on the Tracks*, you came to the wrong place. However, Dylan touches down as close to his *Blonde on Blonde*-era sound as we may ever hear on "My Own Version of You," which seems to be vaguely inspired by the tale of Frankenstein's monster in whatever form Bob may have come across. "Key West (Philosopher Pirate)" is like a travel brochure written by an oracle meant to end up in the hands of some romanticized criminal on the run, and it seems like Dylan places himself in the song as the romanticized criminal, as he has in other recent work like "Pay in Blood" from his 2012

offering *Tempest*. As the nine and a half minute epic slides along, Dylan speaks from the point of view of someone who spent time down there and speaks of the place frankly and preaches of its dark virtues.

In “False Prophet,” Dylan proclaims, “I ain’t no false prophet, I just know what I know.” He says he’s just one of us, while pleading with his eyes and his subtext not to let our pasts be forgotten as we will put ourselves in danger of repeating mistakes. In a *New York Times* interview with historian Douglas Brinkley, Bob Dylan is very candid about his feeling of disgust over the brutal murder of George Floyd, which took place in Dylan’s native state of Minnesota. In the same interview, explaining his sentiment of staying educated about the past, a seemingly wistful Dylan clearly articulates a feeling shared by anybody aging and watching the world change; the kids born yesterday won’t be able to truly grasp what life was like before them.

Luckily, Bob Dylan is hard at work putting it all together in song — the sentiment, the reality, the references and the history — without forgetting to include a bit of tongue-in-cheek humor. He’s delivered the first honest and true State of the Union address we have been given in about four years, and set it all to music.

Album Stats:

Overall Score (Donovan Scale) 4.5 out of 5 Stars

Key Tracks: “Murder Most Foul,” “Goodby Jimmy Reed,” “Key West (Philosopher Pirate),” “Crossing the Rubicon,” “I’ve Made Up My Mind to Give Myself to You”

Singles Released: “Murder Most Foul,” “I Contain Multitudes,” “False Prophet”

Produced by Jack Frost (Bob Dylan pseudonym) for Columbia Records

[Living the Dream: Alexis Lee made her childhood music aspirations a reality](#)



Alexis Lee; Photo credit: Ra World Address

Since there is no live music happening around RI, it seems like the right time to talk to some local jazz musicians who not only provide live soundtracks for our nights out, but whose music may be bringing even more joy and comfort to our days spent inside. This will be a continuing series.

For this edition, I got in contact with local singer Alexis Lee so I could hear about her journey thus far. I've had the pleasure of sharing the bill or the stage with Ms. Lee on a few occasions, and I've always admired the tone and clarity of her voice, the passion she has for performing and her unflappable drive to make great music.

Ben Shaw (*Motif*): What drew you to music?

Alexis Lee: I grew up in a musical family. Everyone in my immediate family, and most members of my

extended family, either sing or play an instrument. I think growing up around all that creative energy contributed largely to music becoming a major form of expression for me.

BS: When did you start playing?

AL: I started singing and writing and producing my own music at 9 years old and have been doing it ever since. I studied piano and violin from age 9 to 11, and then picked piano up again about two years ago.

BS: How did you first get into jazz?

AL: I didn't really start getting into playing jazz until about two years ago when I began my weekly residency at CAV Restaurant. John, the owner of CAV, approached me and asked if I'd be interested in doing a Jazz Night, and that's how it all started! I decided to start it off with a duo, so I hired a good friend Jake Menendez to accompany me on guitar. We spent a couple months shedding a bunch of tunes and started the first week of April 2018. Jazz has become a substantial part of many of my non-original sets since then.

BS: When did you decide to pursue music as a career and how did you start?

AL: I've wanted music to be my career ever since I was a kid. I wrote a song called "It's Breakfast" when I was 11, along with my sister and my cousin, and our ultimate goal was to pitch it to Kellogg's for a Frosted Flakes commercial, so I've literally always had huge dreams for my music. I still do! I started singing and writing and producing my own music at 9 years old and have been doing it ever since, and I began performing at 14 years old in high school. I had pretty crippling stage fright before then, and never took music out of my room, but I began working through that by singing lead in high school, in chorus, theater and the annual musicals.

BS: How has a career in music lived up to your expectations? How has it differed?

AL: The only thing I've ever really wanted from my career was to feel like I was fulfilling my purpose of connecting with others. There are of course so many ways of measuring career success, but connecting with people is what it's all built on. I've performed in a variety of settings, and explored so many music-related ventures and haven't always felt like I was living that purpose. So it's taken some time for me to really find the thing that makes me feel alive and I'm still growing every day into the artist I want to be,

and to communicate the messages I want to share, but I've learned to have fun with that process of exploration.

BS: Where do you usually play around town?

AL: I play pretty regularly at CAV Restaurant, L'Artisan Cafe & Bakery, and Gulfstream Bar & Grille. I also stop in at AS220 and Askew every now and again.

BS: Is there one thing you think aspiring musicians should think about or do when they consider a career in music?

AL: Follow your passion, and prepare to work hard! Keep your head down, and stay focused on your own work, your own abilities, what you as a unique individual have to offer. Give every performance, every opportunity, every day, your best effort and don't be afraid to share.

BS: Beyond music, what other activities do you enjoy?

AL: I like spending time outside walking with my dogs, meeting up with friends (womp...), eating good food and enjoying good company.

For more information and links to Alexis' music, go to alexusalee.com or follow her on Instagram at [@alexusalee](https://www.instagram.com/alexusalee).

Stay safe, stay healthy, and keep listening to jazz!

Ben Shaw is a local composer, performer, and writer. Find him at benjaminshawmusic.com.

Jazz Insights: Oliver Shaw

Oliver Shaw was believed to be America's first musical composer. He was born in Newport in 1779 (long before the Civil War). Following a childhood accident, and a bout with Yellow Fever, he became totally blind. Yet, he studied with the noted organist John Berhonhead and later with veteran society pianist Gottlieb Grauper.

Oliver Shaw began his long career in Boston and eventually returned to Providence. He wrote five volumes of his own music. It included all kinds of rhythm of that era. Much of his music was upbeat. Oliver wrote famous marches, waltzes and Polish polkas, which highlighted his career. His sacred music touched modern-day religious music, which eventually became incorporated into jazz.

He passed away late in 1848, and many of his original compositions are still played today.

They're Doing it Live!: Live music returns to Rooftop at the Providence G



As coronavirus took over the town, live music had to step aside for everyone's safety. But this weekend it returns! Rooftop at the Providence G has scheduled three live performers Friday, Saturday and Sunday, from 3 to 6pm.

On Friday, acoustic guitarist James Grande will perform as the sun sets. His intricate guitar playing will provide an excellent soundtrack to a rooftop cocktail. Saturday, Briana White takes the stage. Briana is the 2018 Motif Music Award winner for "Best Americana Singer/Songwriter." Her acoustic pop songs mixed with a loop pedal entrance audiences. Brian Cabral performs on Sunday. He's known for recording loops live so he gives the sound of a band while performing solo.

Performances take place Friday - Sunday, June 19 - 21, from 3 - 6pm. For more information on this weekend's performances, go to rooftopattheg.com

Cry, Pt. 1: Sargeant Q takes on America's biggest problem



America's history with racism stems to its "discovery" in 1492 when a system was put in place to ensure a certain type of people remain in the driver's seat. As years progressed, we've watched with the false hope that racial tensions would become a thing of the past, but today we continue to see news stories of unarmed Black men and women taken down by their neighbors, and even worse - police. Having had enough, Sargeant Q put his frustrations to song with his latest single "Cry, Pt. 1."

"I just wanna cry. I don't wanna have to die."

That line alone speaks volumes about what Sargeant Q and many like him face on a day-to-day basis in America because of nothing more than the color of their skin. That line acts as a reminder throughout the song of the struggle certain people in this country face daily as news clips from recent tragedies are weaved in, further reminding us that no matter how far some may claim we've come - it surely isn't far enough.

To hear Sargeant Q's latest single, "Cry, Pt. 1,"

visit open.spotify.com/track/5tmR8fmJm9sYBfxx9hIDyP?si=J7ABfdNR4C8fUdxpcqaNw

For more information, Facebook: facebook.com/iamsqtq; Twitter: twitter.com/iamsqtq;
instagram.com/iamsqtq;

Spotify: open.spotify.com/track/5tmR8fmJm9sYBfxx9hIDyP?si=LjMwelYVTeqP3lNZ71kmoA

[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

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://www.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://www.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"

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](https://www.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

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

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 ours 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

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.comwww.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

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

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

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

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." joannelurgio.com

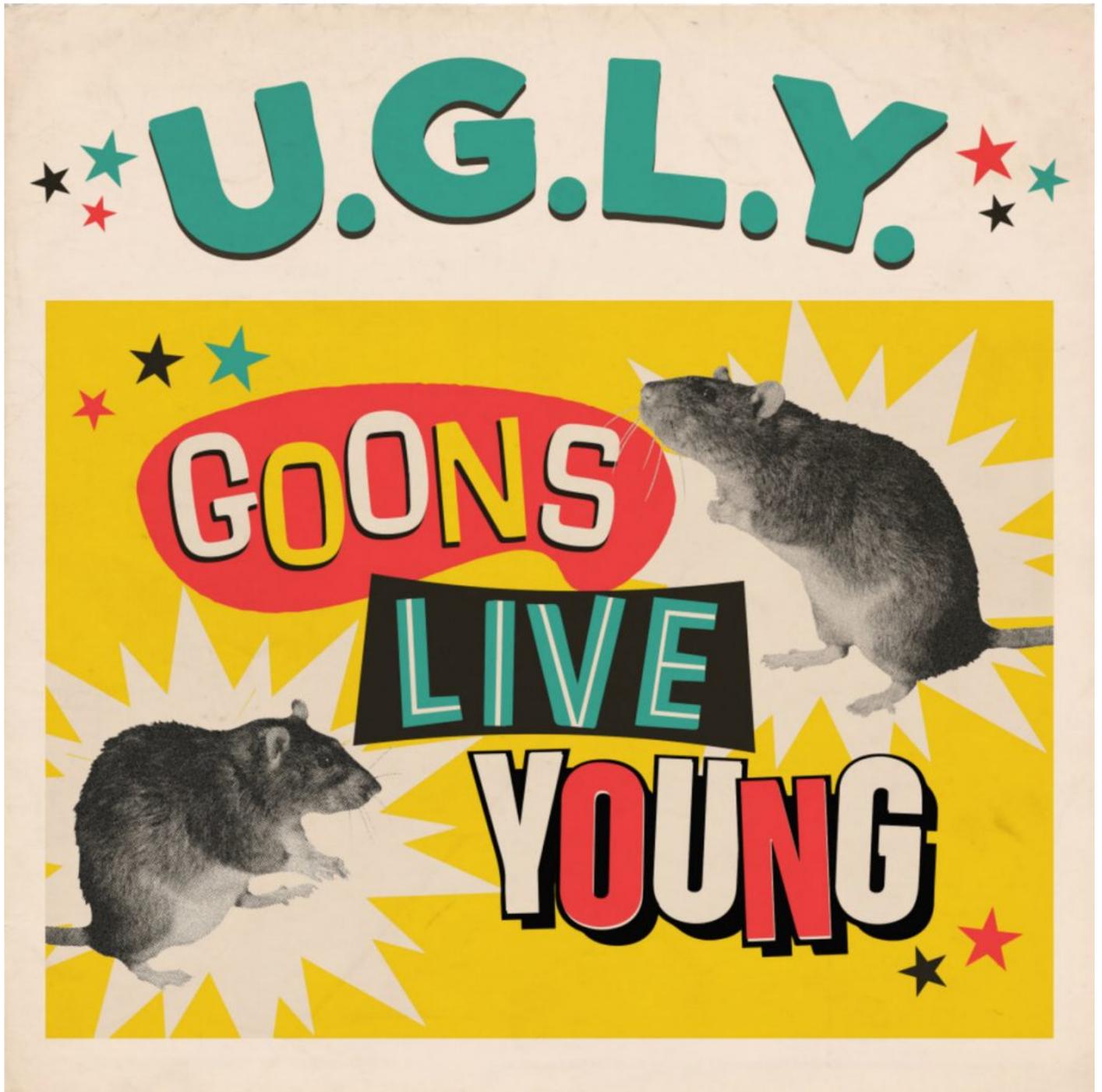
Little by little music is very growing through the cracks. Hopefully it will soon be in full bloom again. The summer concert season has basically been completely canceled, most likely rescheduled to 2021.

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). 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).

That's it for now. Thanks for reading. 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!!!

[The Music Plays On: Check out some tunes that'll ease you into phase 2](#)



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

U.G.L.Y – *Goons Live Young*

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Check out *Goons Live Young*.](#)

Dan Blakeslee — *Lincoln Street Roughs* (Reissue)

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

Blakeslee's brand of pastoral folk is a good relaxing agent during anxious times. The album relies on acoustic instruments — fiddle, cello and others — which make it sound like a sort of impromptu live

session. A highlight is some tremendous flugelhorn in “Dear Ladies Of The Night,” as well as the fiddle in “Your Spanish Scarf.”

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

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

Podcast Pandemonium

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

Where the Living Room Used To Be

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

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

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

It’s Only Rock And Roll

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

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

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

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

The RI Repository

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

Velvet Crush — *Teenage Symphonies to God*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Check it out on Spotify.](#)