

# Mass Manslaughter: But Less Than a Felony

As February rolls in, I don't think it is possible to discuss rock 'n' roll without pausing to remember the victims of The Station fire, which happened 17 years ago. I remember the morning after, getting up to go to work with our LAN line ringing off the hook from my roommate's mother calling to make sure he was alive. He was, but 100 music lovers were not. I went to work up in Mansfield, still not realizing the scope of the catastrophe, only to see my boss leave because two of his cousins were at the show. I can't count over the years how many people have told me they were supposed to go or knew someone who went. It is chilling. In the end they found a patsy, a 26-year-old kid, doing what he was hired to do on every stop on the tour and never blowing up the room — till that night. The Derderians were taken care of because they were rich and well connected. Great White was banned forever from Rhode Island, but the real culprits of this mass manslaughter got off light. February 20 will always be a solemn day in here for our lost sons, daughters and everyone else harmed. We will never forget.

## Less Than A Felony - 27 Years

After speaking of mass murder, it is refreshing to move on to a band called Less Than a Felony. *27 Years* was birthed in a safe zone where Less Than a Felony conjure voodoo in a shed in Smithfield. I was struck by how many of the tunes start in a prayer, notably "Somewhere In Between" and the title track. The melody takes you through like a U2 wave. Yes, these guys are Irish, but I maintain a lot of that guitar style emanated from Keith Levene-era Public Image Limited. "Comes And Goes" is a more aggressive guitar-fueled raver that takes the energy of Hendrix and mixes it with the swagger of Bo Diddley. I give this a solid 5.9 because with EPs, there isn't much to choose from and one really needs that one classic song to carry the weight. Less Than A Felony is one of my favorite live acts, so it was an honor that vocalist/guitarist Charlie Greene took the time to talk about the history of the band and run through the stories behind the tunes of *27 Years* with me.

**Marc Clarkin (Motif):** How did Less Than a Felony come together?

**Charlie Greene (Less Than A Felony):** We met in Jamaica Plain 17 years ago — three Irish lads looking to write some original music. Dessie, our first bass player, moved to Australia, so Ruairi and I moved to Rhode Island and we were on the lookout for a bass player. That's when Damon Blair crossed our path. Then we started writing our second recording. After bouncing around several recording studios, we hit upon the late Great Joe Moody and completed our previous recording. We did some video with local legendary videographer Brett Davey, who coincidentally helped with and produced our latest video.

**MC:** Can you take us behind the scenes and into the infamous shed for some of the backstories behind the tracks?

**CG:** I wrote "Somewhere in Between" for a good friend who went through some unexpected departures with two family members. I penned it late night, when I do my writing accompanied by the solitude of the night. "27 Years" was about I lived in London at 19 years old. It was quite chaotic and turbulent, so my escape was catching Bob Dylan shows and Stiff Little Fingers while hanging out in some Irish pubs and listening to Irish folk music. Some days I'd walk Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus looking to buy old second hand LPs in basement record stores. It all seems like a lifetime ago.

**MC:** How about “Comes and Goes?”

**CG:** “Comes and Goes” is a fictional song that came to me in my time of creativity. It’s about a catwalk model who lived a double life robbing banks and strutting her stuff while everybody was oblivious to it. I hope to do a cool video, maybe with Brett Davie! We loved the music we put to it; it is very rocky excellent bass and drums.

**MC:** What about “Don’t Care?”

**CG:** “Don’t Care” is a song of observation. One summer night I saw a couple having a disagreement on the street. I thought it was a worthless exhibition, but they seem to have it down and then it just took a life of its own from there. We recorded at a nice big studio in Lincoln with Chaimes Parker behind the desk overlooking the Blackstone River. At our last show, Paul Jalette joined us on stage. He brought some untapped energy with background vocals plus guitar, and he’ll join us again too! We’re currently working on new music, so we hope everyone enjoys this EP cause there’s more to follow...

### **Ms. Lauryn Hill**

There is an expression in the music biz about having that “It” thing, and Lauryn Hill has it in spades. There is no denying her talent from her time in the Fugees to her classic solo album, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*. I saw Ms. Hill at Lupo’s (before it was The Strand but after it was The Strand) with Nas, and she was a show stopper. She has a voice for the angels, and her mix of R&B and hip-hop is sublime. I wouldn’t count on this show going off on time, but it will likely be more punctual than say maybe Shane MacGowan.

*Ms. Lauryn Hill will be at The Vets in Providence on February 18.*

### **Lucero**

It’s been 15 years since I first saw Lucero at the old Jake’s. I only remember the year because I had some friends in town for a 10-year college reunion. I was scrambling to come up with things to do with them that didn’t involve going to the “official” reunion activities at Providence College. I only knew that Jake’s usually had rock bands on Saturday nights and that night it happened to be Lucero. That night was a magical transformative show that made me a Lucero fan for life. I bought every CD they had at the merch table, signed the mailing list and followed them on whatever social media existed at the time. I am disappointed that we lost touch on MySpace. Nonetheless, if gritty whiskey blues played by punk rockers is something you’ve been craving, I’ll meet you at The Met for Lucero.

*Lucero will rock The Met Cafe on February 22.*

### **Three Other Shows to Rock You Into Another Dimension**

Viennagram, Triangle Forest, Moodrunners and Sweet Dreams will join forces to rock Dusk on February 7.

The Linda Ronstadt Experience with American Idol Star Tristan McIntosh and Disco Biscuits brings the love to The Met Cafe on February 14.

The Mallet Brothers make their triumphant return to The Met Cafe on February 15.

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