

The Roots Report: Loving You Loving Me: Proper care and feeding for the musician in your life

Okee dokee folks ... for this pre-Valentine's Day issue, I thought I'd write a little primer on how to love a musician. These are words I have used to school my current and former partners in the finer points of dating musicians. Over the years I also have talked to musician friends — both women and men — about this subject. This may not perfectly fit every musician, but it is a start!

We are not an easy lot to love, which can be difficult and frustrating at times for our partners, and we are easily misunderstood. Lifestyles and stereotypes that are not necessarily true are projected upon us — it's not all sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. For a lot of musicians, music isn't a hobby, but a life-consuming way of life. Everything revolves around making music, not out of selfishness, but because music-making just takes that kind of commitment.

Go to some gigs, but don't think that you should go to every gig, everywhere, every time. Honestly, most musicians don't want that because your presence adds a lot of stress to an already stressful situation. Think of it this way: Would you like us to come to work with you every day and watch you work? Having a significant other at gigs can be draining and restrictive, especially if that significant other is demanding, jealous or insecure. Remember: These are not dates, they are gigs and you shouldn't bring your drama. Sitting in the crowd staring all googly-eyed at your partner and casting dagger-eyes at anyone else who may be staring at YOUR musician is just uncomfortable. Interaction and networking with fans is normal and a significant part of working a gig, and assessing every human interaction will just drive BOTH of you crazy. Yes, there will be people who may be interested and have musician fantasies, but it does takes two to tango. If we are in a healthy, committed relationship, we are not going to dance!

Speaking of dancing, many of us really don't like to — we would rather be making the music to dance to. We can be hyper-critical of music because we don't hear it like civilians and we analyze instead. Sometimes this can take the fun out of things — sorry about that.

If you are involved with a musician be prepared for the following: If you go to a gig, you may be asked to sell merch. You also may be asked to wear their hideous band shirt, not only while selling them, but when you are out and about. You will probably play roadie and have to help carry things. You will not go to the car empty handed! A wild night out may involve putting up posters for a show. We are always promoting by handing out gig notices and business cards or posting on Facebook. Just be thankful that you missed the days when we all had to lick hundreds of stamps and stick labels on gig postcards. And don't forget the late-night runs to the post office to get them in the mail!

A lot of musicians have what we all affectionately call GAS, or Gear Acquisition Syndrome. There is no such thing as too many guitars, keyboards, basses or other music paraphernalia. We will spend all our cash on THINGS, and we will justify every purchase because we NEED it. They all feel different, have a different sound and will make our musical lives better and easier. Just accept it, don't argue. We might also buy gig clothes because Heaven forbid we are seen in the same outfit twice. In my case this really

doesn't apply. Instead, I fall in to the other category: "You are going to wear that wrinkled and ripped thing on stage?!"

Remember that musicians are artists, and artists can be moody and distant. We can live in our head. We need space to create and practice that will not involve a significant other, and you have to try to understand this. And the "poor struggling artist" label can sometimes apply, which means you might wind up being the breadwinner. We will travel hundreds of miles, play to five people and be lucky just to make gas money, but would gladly turn around and do it again the next night. We keep odd hours and work hard at what we do because we are driven by a force that few comprehend, so please don't get in the way. You have to get us to love us.

I'm going to talk about just one show this week that is somewhat related to loving a musician. It is about an old partnership and a new partnership in the duo **Aztec-Two-Step**. The duo has been performing for almost 50 years together and is one of my biggest musical influences. The original Aztec-Two-Step is Rex Fowler and Neal Schulman, but Schulman retired and Fowler has a new group of musicians filling the void he left. One of these musicians is Fowler's new wife, Dodie Pettit (this is that new partnership I mentioned). This version of Aztec has been dubbed "Aztec-Two-Step 2.0" by Schulman, who gave it his complete blessing. I spoke with Rex Fowler the other day about Aztec-Two-Step, its future and the upcoming show at the Narrows Center for the Arts on February 16. To read this full interview, "Cockroach Cacophony" to: MotifRI.com/aztectwostep2 For more about the Narrows show on Feb 16, "Rabbit In The Moon" to narrowscenter.org

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