

Roots Report: More than a Column: Gifts, shows and a hint of nostalgia



Photo credit: The Empire Revue

Okee dokee folks... Every time that I drive by the old location where my local Benny's store was, my heart breaks. Over the past month or so construction crews have been picking away at its carcass and subdividing it into more useless retail store units. Just what we need. Benny's was my favorite store, if I needed something, they always seemed to have it. Since Benny's shuttered its doors I have been trying to fill the void by looking for a suitable replacement, but nothing measures up. Now I have to go to several different places to find what Benny's had in one. It was the closest thing we had to a general store and seemingly everyone shopped there. I always ran into friends and neighbors in the store. Even though it was just a store it felt like home.

After the demise of Benny's, the monthly sketch comedy/variety show Empire Revue presented *Benny's: The Musical*. It took me a while to see it because tickets always sold out right away, but it was worth the wait. Keith Munslow and The Sparkling Beatniks perfectly captured the world of Bennys's in music and dialogue, and the show was heartfelt and funny. If you loved the show as much as I did, you will be happy to learn that a CD of the music is now available. The songs are catchy and memorable, and you just may find yourself singing along. Any true Rhode Islander should have this as part of their CD collection. If you participate in holiday gift giving (humbug) then this should be on your list. To get your copy, layaway to: KeithMunslow.com/store. If you want to see what the Sparkling Beatniks have cooked up next, and you really should, then get to AS220 for the December edition of Empire Revue on Sunday, December 1 for the *Give and Get Show*. For tix, charge over to give-get.brownpapertickets.com

"Lido Whoah oh oh oh..." In 1976 that started to be heard on radios and it is still echoing in the airwaves today. It was the "Lido Shuffle" from Boz Scaggs' Silk Degrees album. That recording also yielded "It's Over," "Lowdown," "We're All Alone" and "What Can I Say." Besides doing his own thing,

Scaggs has performed with The Steve Miller Band; and Donald Fagen, Phoebe Snow, Michael McDonald and others in The New York Rock and Soul Revue. Boz will be at Twin River's Event Center on Friday, November 15. For more, "Jump Street" to twinriver.com

Down in Portsmouth, Common Fence Music has been using the newly remodeled digs of the CFP Arts, Wellness & Community Center on Anthony Road. On November 16, they are bringing in the progressive pop bluegrass sound of Front Country. The San Francisco based foursome blend power pop, newgrass picking and oldgrass harmonies to create their own new American roots music. CFM will be selling snacks and beverages, but feel free to BYOB or BYOFood! For more, mow on over to commonfencemusic.org

Our Band is vocalist and pianist/accordionist Sasha Papernik and guitarist and vocalist Justin Poindexter. Together they create an Everly Brothers/Milk Carton Kids style sound with a bit of Johnny Cash and June Carter, but add their own award-winning songwriting, intimate harmonies and an Eastern-European edge. Our Band will appear at the Collaborative in Warren on Friday, November 29. Check them out at ourband.org and then get to the show! For more, "Be As Bright As You" and get to thecollaborative02885.org

Take the Road to Rome and at the fork either go toward Harmony on December 5 or Peacedale on December 6. If you don't know what the Road to Rome is, then you don't know Sarah Potenza and you should! *Road to Rome* is Potenza's latest recording and showcases the RI native's powerful voice and songwriting talents. Sarah is a real rockin' diva who has been out there working it and paying her dues playing rock and roots music for years. Potenza belts out "I Work For Me" on the opening track of her new disc and continues with tunes like "Who Do I Think I Am?," "Diamond," "Earthquake" and just keeps it coming; this woman declares, demands and delivers! Potenza and her husband/musical partner Ian Crossman will be performing two area shows: The Route 44 Music Series in Harmony on December 5 (just a couple of miles from where Sarah and Ian grew up) and The PumpHouse Music Works in Peacedale on December 6. You should witness Potenza live. For tickets and more, "Tear the Roof Off" and get to sarahpotenza.net

A short drive to New London can put you in the audience when music legends Hot Tuna play their Acoustic 50th Anniversary Show on Saturday, December 7. Starting as a side project during their Jefferson Airplane days, Grammy winners and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductees Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Casady will celebrate with their bluesy fusion of rock and free rhythm. Also performing will be Larry Campbell and Teresa Williams. Coming up in January at The Garde is comedian, actor, writer, host and internet sensation Randy Rainbow, best known for his viral political spoofs and song parodies. For more about these shows, "Embryonic Journey" to gardearts.org

That's it for now. Don't forget about the Fuzek-Rossoni 30th Anniversary Reunion show at Blackstone River Theatre on November 16! Thanks for reading. JohnFuzek.com