

Roots Report: Take Me Out of the Ballgame

Okee dokee folks ... I am going to preface my column by stating that much to my father's disappointment, I do not like baseball at all. Last week I received a mass e-mail that must have been sent to every musician in the state (they didn't blind cc the e-mail) from the Pawtucket Red Sox. They asked performers to play before each one of their home games. Sounds like a good gig, doesn't it? Well, it's not. It pays peanuts. Actually, it doesn't pay at all. They only offer a hot dog and general admission to the game that you perform for. You provide your own sound system and play for almost two hours. So, in essence, with set-up, you work about four hours for free, err ... for a hot dog. In *Motif's* Oct '14 issue, I wrote a bit about musicians performing for free. I guess the PawSox didn't see that column. Before I go on, I have to admit that last year I agreed to go play this gig. Why, you may ask? As I mentioned before, my father is a HUGE baseball fan. He actually tried out for the Red Sox after he got out of the Air Force, but was told that he was too old. He ended up playing softball on Sundays for most of his life — until the artificial hip benched him!

I wasn't crazy about doing the gig. It was kind of sketchy, but they agreed to let me sing the National Anthem before the game. I thought that it would be worth doing for Dad. After confirming the gig, I never heard back from the person who booked me. The day before the game, I still had heard nothing. I fired off an e-mail to the PawSox that said if I didn't hear from them that day I would not be able to do the gig. I had no idea where I was going to set up, what time I had to be there, and how many of those general admission tix I was going to get. I don't work like that. I PLAN gigs. I ALWAYS get the info up front, but in this case I was told that it would be sent to me. I received a response to my e-mail on the day of the gig. They wrote that they told me I wouldn't get info until the day of show and that I WAS NOT going to be performing the National Anthem. I replied that I never would have agreed to that arrangement and the only reason I was going to play the gig was so I could sing the National Anthem. It was already too late to make arrangements to have my father attend and I would have had to rush to get there in time to perform. The PawSox were not happy, and they told me I was blacklisted from ever playing there because I left them without music that day. I figured that I would never hear from them ever again. Wrong. In addition to the recent mass e-mail about this year's PawSox offer, I received a phone call asking me to perform. Had they forgiven me? I didn't call them back; I didn't want to play for them. I was just going to blow the whole thing off until the other folks who received the e-mail began sharing their disdain for the gig offer via "reply all" and by posting on Facebook. I love a good controversy. I chimed in. I told folks about my experience with the offer. Others voiced their concern about setting a poor example for musicians by playing for free. It sparked a firestorm of back and forth e-mails and Facebook posts.

The controversy still burns. Some folks agreed to play for free while others continue to protest. Some musicians don't understand their own worth. I know that I should have never agreed to play last year. It was wrong of me, but I was going to do it for Dad. In a way I am glad that the gig didn't happen, but where else am I ever going to sing the National Anthem before a baseball game? Fenway Park? Yeah, right. If the PawSox WANT music before a game they should PAY the performers a proper amount for the gig, put them in a decent place to play (not a parking lot for people to hear them only as they walk by), and treat them with AT LEAST the SAME amount of respect that they show the ball players. They should save their money, keep the stadium that they already have and pay people what they are worth! Enough said, for now... Read on...

If you want to learn about navigating your way through the murky waters of the music business, mark Sun, May 3 on your calendar when the first annual Southern New England Music Expo premieres at The Crowne Plaza in Warwick. The event includes anything having to do with music and is geared toward the average to adept music creator. The expo will feature celebrity meet and greet/book signings and guest speakers, including Ken Caillat, who produced and engineered several Fleetwood Mac albums. A keynote panel featuring Joe Belliotti, who was on Billboard's "Power 100" list of the most powerful players in the music business; Josh Burke, VP Strategy & Major Accounts for Music Dealers — a music agency that works with brands, agencies, TV networks, and film & game studios; and Jeff Rabhan, Chair of The Clive Davis Institute for Recorded Music at NYU and artist manager. Also expect hit songwriter moderated workshops/seminars, song critiques, and a songwriter, performance and pitch session. Equipment, recording, instruction, used vinyl and other music memorabilia will be for for sale, as well as any kind of musical service of interest to music lovers. This event was founded by local musician Greg Lato in partnership with Rob Marin. Lato says, "I wanted to create the type of event I always wished existed while growing up as a music fan and musician in Rhode Island." For more, treble over to snemusicexpo.com

On April 28, you can enjoy an evening of solo, acoustic music from Richard Thompson. The award-winning guitar master, songwriter, performer, former member of Fairport Convention and member of the Order of the British Empire (this is not a band, it's a title bestowed upon him by Queen Elizabeth II) will be swinging by The Met in Pawtucket. Named by *Rolling Stone Magazine* as one of the Top 20 Guitarists of All Time, Richard Thompson is also one of the world's most critically acclaimed and prolific songwriters. Probably his most famous and most covered song is the moving "1952 Vincent Black Lightning." Having co-founded the groundbreaking group Fairport Convention as a teenager in the '60s, Richard Thompson and his mates were one of the innovators of British Folk Rock. At age 21, he left the band to pursue his own career, followed by a decade-long musical partnership with his then-wife Linda and then 30 years as a highly successful solo artist. Thompson's massive body of work includes over 40 albums and numerous film soundtracks. Don't miss this opportunity to witness a musical genius live on stage.

I am out of room so I will just mention a couple of other shows worthy of your time and the ticket price. Stone Soup has two shows up their season's sleeve. On April 25, catch Mustard's Retreat, with Lori Diamond and Fred Abatelli opening. On May 9, it's Martyn Joseph. Spread over to StoneSoupCoffeehouse.org for more. *Motif's* Best Americana Act nominees Longshot Voodoo and guests Crocodile River Music will be at the Blackstone River Theatre on May 9. As a part of this show, there will be a Drum Workshop led by the Crocodile River Music drummers at 4pm. The last time these two bands played together it resulted in a sold-out, standing-room-only show, so get your tickets early. Paddle over to riverfolk.org. Get your Contra Dancin' shoes on! The Greater Providence Contra Dance gives you a chance to dance on Fri, April 17, at St Paul's Episcopal Church in Pawtucket. David Eisenstadter will do the calling with Jon Cannon on fiddle and Max Newman on guitar. Sashay over to providencecontra.com.

That's it for now. Thanks for reading. JohnFuzek.com