

# LAZIE

Indie Magazine

EDITION 62
JUNE 2025

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ALLISON ROGERS.JR
SHERISE AT OPPDAL
DALE EDWARD CHUNG
TESKEY
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## MAGAZINE INFORMATION

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## EDITORS COLUMN

WHATS COMING ?

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FERNANDO'S EYES
TESKEY
DALE EDWARD CHUNG
ALLISON ROGERS
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## COLUMNS

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## COVER

## CHARU SURI

You Can Make A Difference

# Editor's Note



Dear Readers,

In a world flooded with mainstream noise, there's something deeply refreshing about a song that slips through the cracks — a melody shaped in bedrooms, basements, and local studios by artists creating not for fame, but for truth. This is the spirit of independent music — raw, unfiltered, and fiercely authentic. It's this spirit that Lazie Indie Magazine is proud to champion every single month.

Indie music is more than a genre — it's a declaration. It's the sound of creative freedom, of refusing to follow pre-made formulas. Whether it's a soul-bearing solo act in a small town or an experimental producer pushing boundaries in a city studio, indie artists remind us that the most powerful art often comes from the margins.

But independence doesn't mean isolation. If indie music is the heartbeat, sharing is the lifeline. Without corporate backing or commercial gatekeepers, these artists rely on us — the listeners, the fans, the communities — to spread the word, pass the link, wear the T-shirt and show up. Every stream, every post, every recommendation is an act of support that can change a creative life.

That's why platforms like Lazie Indie matter. We exist to be a megaphone for these voices — to bring the underground above ground, to shine light on the overlooked, and to remind the world that music doesn't need polish to be powerful.

In this June 2025 edition, we celebrate indie artists who are writing their own rules and blazing new trails. From genre-defiers to old-school revivalists, what binds them is not sound — it's spirit. And that spirit thrives when shared.

So keep listening. Keep sharing. Keep showing up. Because when we support independent music, we're not just supporting songs — we're protecting the soul of creativity. Stay true. Stay Lazie.

***Jay Pillai***
Editor-in-Chief

***Lazie Indie Magazine***



# INTERCONTINENTAL MUSIC AWARDS

**Finalists will be announced on June 30th!**

Anthrax vocalist, Neil Turbin (DeathRiders, Bleed the Hunger); Country For a Cause, featuring Lulu Roman, John Berry, T Graham Brown, Buddy Jewell, Billy Yates, Ronnie McDowell, and Bobby Lewis; NAMM Metal Ja[illegible]-15, featuring members of Anthrax, Dio, King Diamond, Racer X, Alcatrazz, Great White, Badlands, Circle II Circle, Hurricane, Jon Oliva's Pain, Femme Fatale, Leatherwolf, Lizzy Borden, Death, London, Fight, Lynch Mob, Metal Church, Michael Schenker G[illegible]ntai[illegible]bituary, Sa[illegible]e, Jeff Sc[illegible] Ba[illegible]ddy Miles Band, The Babys, and Deicide; Metal documentary, Hair I Go Again, fe[illegible]t Metal S[illegible] Jeff Keith[illegible]Hannon (Tesla), Ron Keel (KEEL), Steve Blaze (Lillian Axe), Frank Bello and Joey Bell[illegible]na[illegible]x), [illegible]Warner (T[illegible]ult), as well as mem[illegible]of Kix, Stryper, Queensrÿche, Quiet Riot, Warrant, Motörhead, LA Guns and mo[illegible]oub[illegible]inu[illegible]ntry artis[illegible]y Gilman,[illegible]g Juno Award Winner, Robert Michaels; Hallmark and Lifetime movie composer, Angela Predhomme; metal guitar virtuoso, Xander Demos (James Rivera, Sabbath Judas Sabbath); multi-gold and platinum award w[illegible]n Orchestra, John Waite, Doug Kistner; Industry Veteran and tour replacement for Grammy Winners, Margaret Dorn & The Accidentals; Turkish Musician, Barista, featuring Simon Phillips on drums; Sony songwriting duo, Fitzsimon and Brogan; #1 iTunes Blues chart artist, Sun King Rising; Indie Film Composer Tracy Chow and Once Great Estate; Italian composer, singer-song[illegible]er Lorenz[illegible]Gabaniz[illegible] and 30Million-sell[illegible]g artist, Jeff Christie; Scottish teen sensation, Hannyta; Hungarian Violinist Extraordinaire, Ber[illegible]dett[illegible]; Fo[illegible]ing m[illegible]s, A[illegible]Ja[illegible]ni[illegible]Sh[illegible]Ro[illegible]ockers Ludlow Creek; Top 15 UK iTunes Alt Rockers, FiveDFit; Member of leg[illegible]ry prog rockers, Cra[illegible]The Sky, Joe Macre, So[illegible]Billboa[illegible]Hit Producer/DJ, Georgie Porgie; Top 10 Billboard Magazine charting blu[illegible]t, Th[illegible]Hammond, Top 15 Billboard charting a[illegible]st and member of Grammy and Dove Award winner, D.O.C., DPB; iTunes country[illegible]art-t[illegible]er, Tim Tye and Midnight Sky, Roots rocking married duo, Eleyet McConnell; Top 40 US iTunes country charting duo, Cliff & Susa[illegible]ame[illegible]"Go[illegible]", [illegible]Zach M[illegible]e, [illegible]ian pop rock singer-songwriter and composer, Michael Zuzek; #1 Canad[illegible]d UK iTunes C[illegible]artist, Bonnie Milne, Australian/Canadian country singer songwriter, Robert Ross; Guitarist/Singer Songwriter, Patti Spadaro; #1 Intern[illegible]ing Christian Country artist, Lady Redneck; Pittsburgh "Supergroup" Vento, Ziggy[illegible]k, & McCarthy, Alt-rock trio, The Perfect Storm, Alt-pop rockers Brendemere; Dutch singer-songwriter Harry Kappen; Dallas-based artist Shweta Harve; #1 UK Itunes Jpop artist, Olivia Millin; Dayton Singer Songwriter[illegible]e;

**MTS**

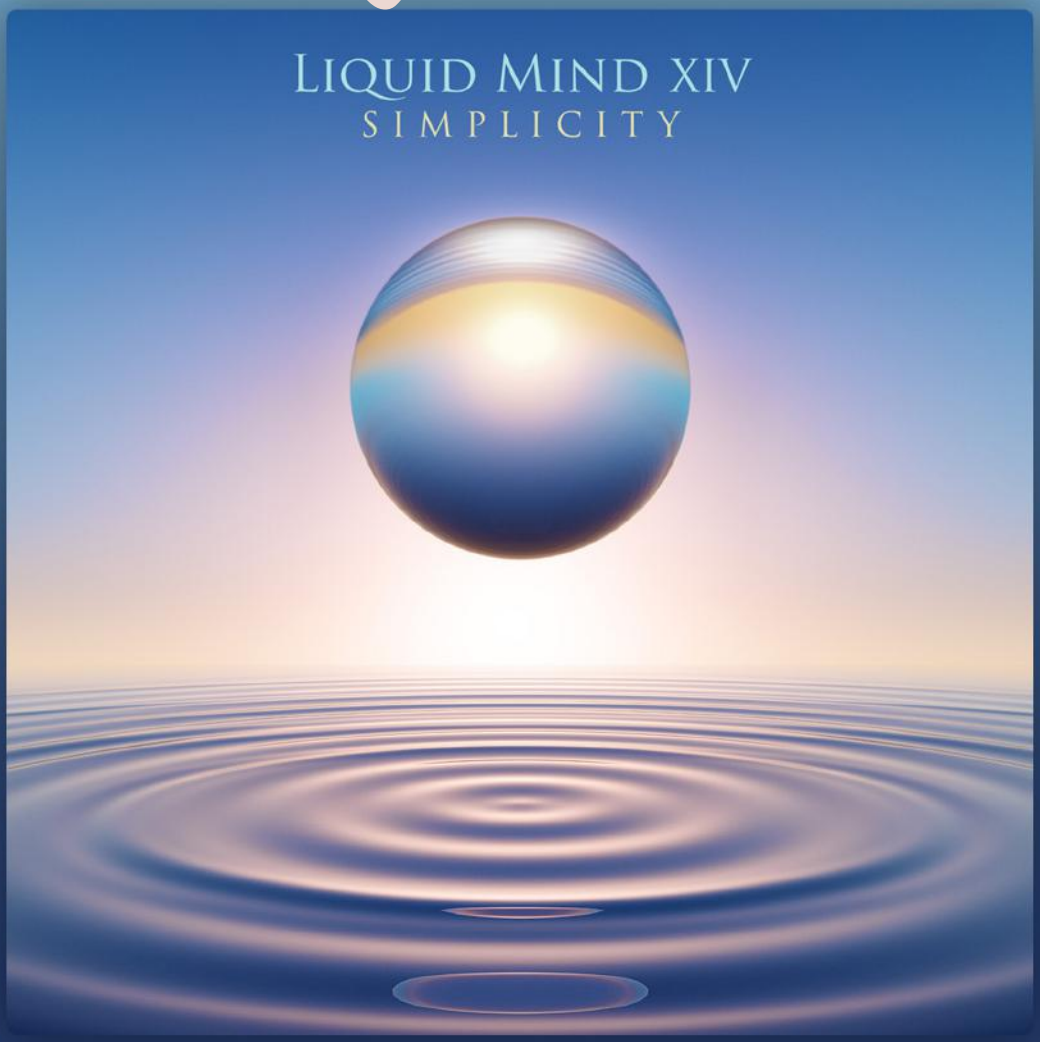
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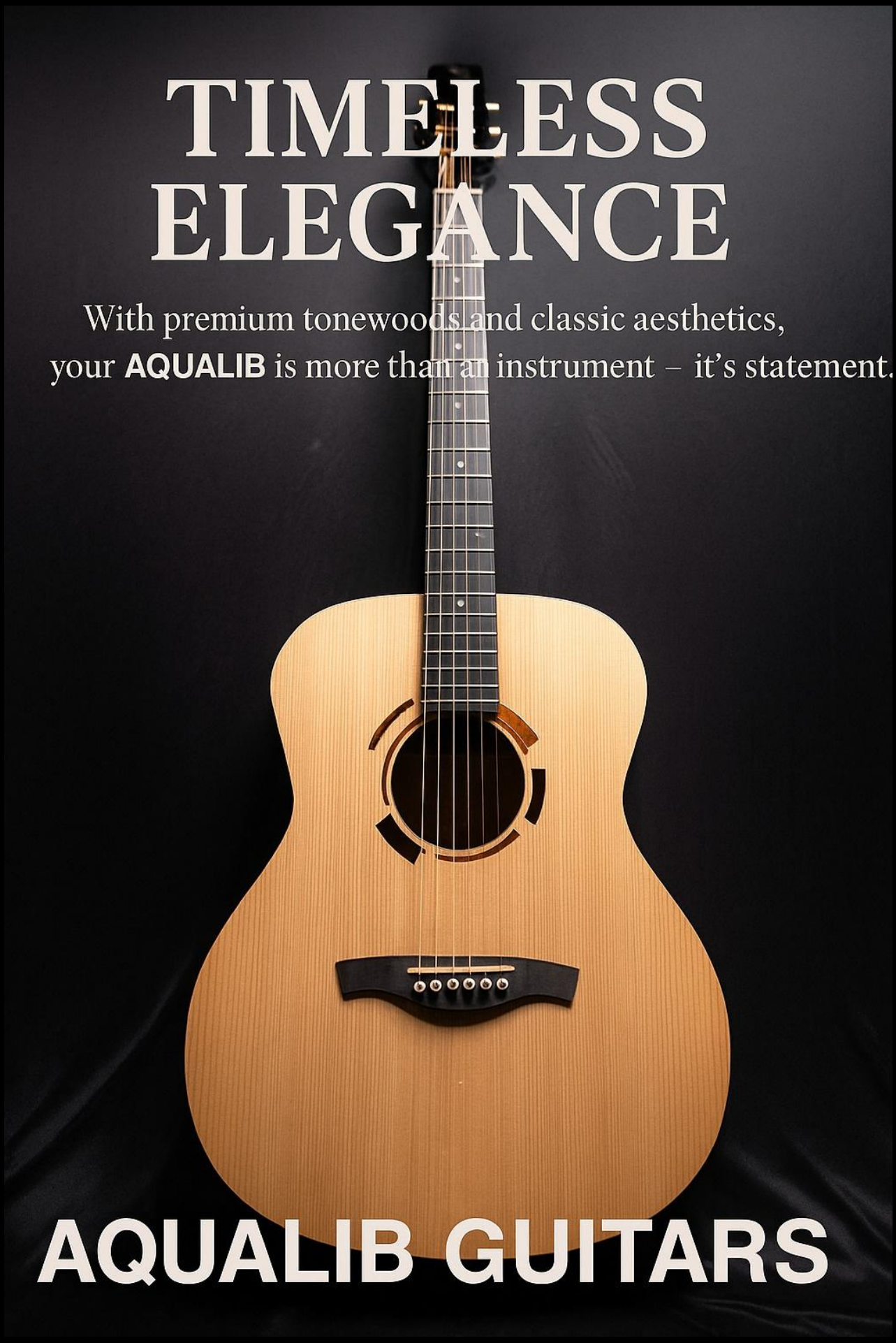



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Cover Story

# Charu Suri

# Charu Suri

BRIDGING WORLDS THROUGH MUSIC AND RAGA

Charu Suri is not just a composer and pianist; she is a fearless innovator who has carved a unique niche by blending the ancient soul of Indian ragas with a modern, genre-transcending musical voice. Her latest album, Shayan, is a landmark in her journey — her fifth full-length release and her first non-jazz project — created to help people find rest and deep sleep using the soothing energies of evening ragas.

Shayan, meaning "a deep state of rest" in Sanskrit, is more than just an album — it is a musical offering for the spirit. Departing from her usual jazz-rooted stylings, Charu turns to Indian classical music in its purest, most meditative form. The album is based entirely on calming evening ragas like Kalyani, Desh, Durga and Jog, traditionally played after sunset. With this work, she invites listeners into a peaceful space, encouraging inner quiet and restoration in a world that rarely slows down.

Charu is joined on Shayan by a stunning lineup of international talent. Featured performers include flutist Premik Russell Tubbs (of John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra), Grammy® nominee Tess Remy-Schumacher (cello), vocalist Anita Lerche, Grammy® winner Jim Kimo West (guitar) and dulcimer virtuoso Max ZT, alongside a global ensemble of vocalists, harpists, and flutists. Each track on the album showcases a different raga, interpreted through a carefully chosen ensemble to preserve its mood while creating something universal and timeless. The project is a sonic tapestry of healing and deep listening.

While Shayan reveals a new facet of her artistry, Charu Suri's creative path has always been rooted in bold musical exploration. Her earlier albums — The Book of Ragas, The Book of Ragas Vol. 2 and Ragas & Waltzes — garnered widespread critical acclaim for introducing Indian ragas into jazz frameworks. Jazz legend Arturo O'Farrill praised her raga-based improvisations as "singular," and audiences often describe her sound as unlike anything they've ever heard before.

Charu's musical background is as rich and diverse as her sound. A classical piano prodigy who began playing at five and performing by nine, she won an international piano competition at 15. Having lived on four continents, her work is a reflection of a global journey — shaped by South Indian roots, Western classical training, jazz sensibility and deep immersion in Indian classical music.

A celebrated performer, Charu is one of the few Indian female composers to have performed original work at Carnegie Hall. She has graced stages at Lincoln Center, NJPAC (where her music will be performed by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra in 2024), and venues around the world, including the U.S. Virgin Islands. Her collaborations have included iconic musicians like John Patitucci, Joe Lastie, Steve Gadd and Kobi Arad, with whom she recorded her upcoming album Rags & Ragas.

As Shayan continues to resonate with listeners seeking calm and clarity, Charu Suri proves once again that music — when rooted in authenticity and soul — transcends labels and genres. Her journey is one of fearless creativity, guided by a deep reverence for melody and a commitment to making music that heals.




**Jay Pillai speaks to Charu Suri**

**Jay:** What's new since we last spoke? Have there been any significant developments, performances or creative shifts you'd like to share?
**Charu:** I have been touring a lot more, building tighter set lists and rapport with my band and audiences worldwide. Touring is a special and sacred thing for me: It helps me truly connect with my audiences and play for them the new sound I am developing. I have also collaborated on more tracks with world-renowned musicians, and I am very excited about SHAYAN, my upcoming album with some tremendous talent all over the world.
I was awarded a Jazz Roads Artist grant in 2024, that enabled me to tour several venues including Blues Alley, Dazzle Denver (where I will return this year) and Preservation Hall in New Orleans as well. As far as creative shifts go, I have been listening to various ragas, trying to deepen that knowledge, while learning more hardcore jazz and even bebop to take my craft to the next level.

**Jay: Your work blending Indian ragas with jazz has been called singular and groundbreaking. What first inspired you to merge these two musical traditions?**
**Charu:** I actually did not seek out to create "raga jazz," the sounds just came to me based on my traditions and upbringing. Since I learned both Carnatic music and Western Classical at an early age, I was always drawn to virtuosic jazz music (Bill Evans, David Brubeck etc.). And when I improvised it would be a bit of my own style, and eventually I started improvising over ragas without even knowing what I was doing (just a subconscious free improvisation). It was only later on, after several compositions, that my band started asking me concretely what I was doing, that I was able to backtrack and pinpoint that I was using ragas as a basis for improvisation and harmonization that my style of "raga jazz" came to be.

**Jay: You've collaborated with legendary musicians like Joe Lastie and John Patitucci and many more. What is your creative process like when working with artists from such diverse musical backgrounds?**

**Charu:** I try to respect and learn their repertoire solidly. I went to several Preservation Hall concerts many times, listened to New Orleans repertoire, and also listened to a lot of John Patitucci's work before approaching them and even then, I was super nervous. But they were kind and wonderful to work with. The same is true of Steve Gadd, who graces my album, RAGS & RAGAS. I think doing your homework, respecting their music and their oeuvre, is key.

**Jay: RAGAS & WALTZES was praised for its reinvention of the European waltz. What drew you to reinterpret that specific form, and how did you approach it musically?**
**Charu:** My father and I used to listen to waltzes together, all the time when I was growing up. For New Year's Eve, we would always tune into the Vienna Philharmonic to listen to Strauss. Waltzes were part of my DNA and my daily listening diet. So when my dad passed away, I wanted to really honor his memory and compose an album featuring both ragas and waltzes---two musical styles that he introduced me to. And once again, I don't have a concrete answer or a specific approach. I pretty much composed most of that album the week after my dad died (Waltz for My Father was composed the day after he died), and the music just poured out, almost in one setting. It was just the way I viewed my dad's musical contributions to my growth. The waltzes are how I thought of my dad: elegant and just so gracefully, eager to brilliantly dance through life.

**Jay: As one of the few Indian female composers to perform original work at venues like Carnegie Hall and NJPAC, how do you see your role in expanding representation in classical and jazz music?**
**Charu:** I see myself as a risk taker and a pioneer, eager to push boundaries and encourage other female voices, to show their musical creativity. I do consider myself as fearless in the musical sense, and I think that individual voices should shine and not live in a cookie cutter world. There are so many regions in India, each with its own musical traditions and customs; we can all learn from them and bring our individuality to music through creativity and self-expression.

**Jay: Tell us about your upcoming album Shayan. How does it differ from your previous releases in terms of sound and vision?**
**Charu:** It is not a jazz album, for starters! A lot of people are a bit shocked to hear this. But over the past year, I needed to slow down from the crazy frenzied pace that I had. And the music ended up reflecting this desperate need for inner peace and tranquility.
The album is dedicated to my mother, who had trouble sleeping after my dad died, and I also knew of several people who could not sleep because of the current socio-political landscape. I thought to myself, wouldn't it be great if we could all heal naturally and sleep better listening to evening Indian ragas rather than taking a pill or drug, and that was how the idea of SHAYAN was born.
The album uses all beautiful evening ragas, from Durga to Desh to Kalyani. Each one features different and diverse artists. The entire album is supposed to relax you in a deep, meaningful way and represents a beautiful journey through Indian ragas.

**Jay: You've been a piano prodigy since childhood and now a genre pioneer. How do you balance technical mastery with emotional storytelling in your compositions?**
**Charu:** I have to feel everything. As Bill Evans said, jazz is a feeling. And then I put it into music and if there are passages that don't convey the proper emotion, I practice and work on that until it's there.





Everything starts with strong emotion, and a genuine and authentic connection---without that, the piece becomes cold, sterile and meaningless. The virtuosity and skill all mean nothing if the heart isn't there.

**Jay: What's next for you? Are there any dream collaborations, projects or new musical directions you're excited to explore?**

**Charu:** I'm super excited about my next album in 2026, called Bossa Raga, where I will explore the beautiful dovetailing of bossa nova, samba and Brazilian rhythms with ragas. I have some wonderful folks I'm eager to collaborate with for that project.

## Listen to Charu Suri at :

https://linktr.ee/charusuri

# SHAYARY

## CHARU SURI



Shayan is Charu Suri's fifth full-length album, and her first non-jazz album. It is dedicated to helping people sleep better, using the calming energies of evening Indian ragas, from Kalyani to Raga Desh. **SHAYAN**, the Sanskrit word for deep state of rest, or sleep, is also dedicated to help people sleep better, using the power of calming evening Indian ragas, meant to be played right after sunset. On the record are world-renowned musicians including flutist **Premik Russell Tubbs,** one of the original members of John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra, -Grammy® nominee **Tess Remy-Schumache**r, vocalist **Anita Lerche**, Grammy® winner **Jim Kimo West,** and Grammy® nominated dulcimer performer, **Max ZT**.

**The full list of performers are below:**
Mary Dawood Catlin (voice)
Haruna Fukazawa (flute)
Ron Korb (flute)
Ravichandra Kulur (flute)
Anita Lerche (voice)
Raniero Palm (Venezuelan Strings)
Tess Remy-Schumacher (cello)
Premik Russell Tubbs (flute)
Ramya Shankar (ukulele)
Peter Sterling (harp)
Charu Suri (piano)
Siyer (Shriram Iyer) - (vocals)
Philip Vaiman (violin)
Jim Kimo West (guitar)
Max ZT ( dulcimer)

**TRACKS (listening samples only www.charusuri.com/fyc)**

1. **Mohanam Hymn** (feat. Anita Lerche, Tess Remy-Schumacher, Premik Russell Tubbs, Mary Caitlin, Charu Suri) Mohanam is a pentatonic Carnatic (South Indian) raga whose Hindustani equivalent is Bhupali

2. **Nightingale** (raga Bagesri) feat. Jim Kimo West, Charu Suri. Bagesri is an evening raga performed from 9 p.m. to midnight

3. **Shayan** (feat. Premik Russell Tubbs, Anita Lerche, Tess Remy-Schumacher, Charu Suri, Mary Caitlin). Shayan uses raga Kalyani, the Eastern equivalent of the Lydian scale

4. **Raga Jog** (feat. Tess Remy-Schumacher, Max ZT). Raga Jog is a Hindustani classical raga, often described as lively and melodious, typically sung at the late night or early morning hours.

5. **Inner Peace** (feat. Ravichandra Kulur, Shriram Iyer, Tess Remy-Schumacher, Charu Suri)
Based on Raga Desh, an evening raga that is often associated with the monsoon season.

6. **Joy** (feat. Haruna Fukazawa, Philip Vaiman, Charu Suri, Ramya Shankar)
Based on evening raga Durga, a sweet Hindustani pentatonic scale that shares some commonalities with the Carnatic Shuddha Saveri.

7. **Shayan** (reprise), feat. Venezuelan Strings and Ron Korb
A reprise of the title track, Shayan, based on evening raga Kalyani.


















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**BIOGRAPHIES**

**TESS REMY-SCHUMACHER** (cello; she also has a cello solo track using Raga Jog, on the album).
Dr. Tess Remy-Schumacher is a featured Solo Artist on Kitt Wakeley's 2023 GRAMMY® winning CD "An Adoption Story." She won 1st Prize at the International Carlo-Zecchi Competition in Rome, multiple Silver and Bronze Medals at the Global Music Awards, Grand Prize of the 2022 Akademia Music Award and 2023 Hall of Fame Inductee, Best Instrumentalist of the 2023 and 2024 InterContinental Music Awards, and the CL Shaddock Award of the 2023 Mississippi Music Awards. She was a 2022 Native American Music Awards nominee, a 2023 and 2024 Josie Music Awards nominee, and is a Featured Artist on Kirsten Copley's 2023 GRAMMY® nominated CD "Aquamarine." Her most recent Album "Remembrance and Renewal" just received the World Entertainment Award for "Best Classical Album" 2025.
As a concert soloist, she performed in Europe, Asia, Australia, and the U.S., including Wigmore Hall in London, Jubilee Hall in Singapore, Bradley Hall in Chicago, and multiple times Carnegie Recital Hall in New York.
Among her 20+ albums are premiere recordings of David Maslanka's Cello Concerto "Remember Me" and Carter Pann's Cello Concerto "High Songs" both with UCO Wind Symphony under conductor Dr. Brian Lamb.
Dr. Remy earned her DMA and MM from the University of Southern California and her Artist Diploma (terminal degree) from the Musikhochschule Koeln, Germany. She studied with Boris Pergamenschikow, Eleonore Schoenfeld, Lynn Harrell, and Jacqueline du Pre.
Tess was a Visiting Scholar and Performance Fellow at Harvard University 2010-2012. Previously, she was tenured faculty at James Cook University, Australia. Currently, she is Professor for Cello and co-founder of the Brisch Center for Historical Performance at UCO. https://www3.uco.edu/centraldirectory/profiles/5999

**PREMIK RUSSELL TUBBS** (flute) is an acclaimed multi-instrumentalist with a music career spanning 5 decades. He is a virtuoso master of all saxophones, all genres of flutes, lap steel guitar & EWI, renowned for his brilliance which spans all arenas from jazz fusion to global to traditional eastern mellifluous melodies, to his own ingenious soul-infused improvisation. He is a skilled innovator and prolific artist whose unique approach brings both a cosmic and spiritual vibe to the sound he projects. He is a composer, recording artist, producer, and instructor whose distinctive career continues to flourish. Premik has toured the world, has performed and/or recorded with Carlos Santana, John McLaughlin and The Mahavishnu Orchestra, Whitney Houston, Sting, Narada Michael Walden, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Jean-Luc Ponty, Ravi and Anoushka Shankar, Krishna Das, Lady Gaga, Elton John, Billy Joel, James Taylor, the list goes on... Premik is the on-call wind player for Grammy winning producer Will Ackerman, founder of Windham Hill Records.

**HARUNA FUKAZAWA** is a New York-based flutist, composer, improviser, and Muramatsu America Flutes Artist originally from Tokyo, Japan. Classically trained at Musashino Academia Musicae, she discovered her passion for jazz under the mentorship of legendary flutist Frank Wess. Her bold, expressive style blends tradition with vibrant improvisation, earning her performances at top venues like Carnegie Hall, Blue Note, The Stone, and The Bitter End, as well as international stages including Italy's Trieste Summer Rock Festival. Haruna leads the Haruna Fukazawa Quintet, whose debut album on Summit Records reached the JazzWeek Top 50, and co-leads the chamber jazz trio Jazz Triangle 65-77. She's a multiple-time winner of the National Flute Association's Jazz Flute Big Band Audition and has been featured at several NFA Conventions. A dedicated educator and improvisation advocate, she's led workshops around the world and serves on the NFA Jazz Committee, championing the growth of jazz flute and creative expression.




**ANITA LERCHE (vocals):** Anita Lerche is a Danish-American, Billboard Top-2 charting, internationally acclaimed singer and songwriter, best known for her pioneering work in Punjabi music. With a career that spans continents, Anita has earned widespread recognition for using her music as a bridge between cultures, languages, and traditions—dedicated to fostering unity through the universal language of song. A dynamic performer with a global presence, Anita's artistry has been honored
with numerous awards and accolades. Her latest album, Songs from the Kingdom of Denmark, is a deeply personal homage to her Danish roots. The album has received critical acclaim, including Best Classical Album from the World Entertainment Awards and the Gold Medal for Female Vocalist from the Global Music Awards.
Her powerful and versatile voice also features on the GRAMMY®-nominated album Impossible Dream by Aaron Lazar, further solidifying her reputation as a world-class vocalist with a unique ability to connect across genres and audiences.
More info: **www.AnitaLerche.com**

**PHILIP VAIMAN :** Professional career of violinist Philip Vaiman took him to concert halls around the globe and premier recording studios. He has also appeared on screen in such blockbusters as "The Wedding Planner", "Amy's O's", and "Spider-Man 3".
Philip Vaiman is a Russian-born violinist of international renown as a soloist and chamber performer. Beginning his musical training in Russia and having graduated Moscow's Gnessin Music Lyceum, Vaiman then moved to the United States and graduated Cum Laude from USC's Thornton School of Music. During this time, he performed throughout the United States, western and eastern Europe and Asia.
Vaiman's recordings are featured on award-winning motion pictures, documentaries, animated films, and commercials. He has recorded for and performed with a diverse roster of artists including Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones, Sting, Taylor Swift, Tony Bennett, Shakira, Dido, Goo Goo Dolls, Guns N' Roses, Michael Jackson and Pearl Jam.

**MARGEE MINIER-TUBBS**, Executive Producer, Writer, co-Composer, Lyricist and Vocalist for Oneness-World, is a multi-faceted artist with a diverse international background and prolific career. As well as being an innovative songwriter, she holds a degree in Fashion Design from The Fashion Institute of Technology in N.Y., studied at La Sorbonne in Paris, France, is a French translator, lived and worked in 21 countries. After a decade of creating international fashion trend reports for Saks Fifth Avenue and The IWS Woolmark Company, promoting Paris Fashion around the world, Margee created The Margétoile School of Fashion Design where she teaches students ages 10 – 18. She mentors in the Sustainable Fashion movement globally. Margee worked as a translator in the Music Industry at MIDEM, the International Music Conference in Cannes, France, attended World Music Festivals and worked with musicians and composers from around the world. She studied classical piano for 2 years, jazz piano for 3 years, ballet and modern dance for 15 years.
Margee is married to acclaimed multi-instrumentalist Premik Russell Tubbs. In 2024, she and her husband created their first album, a unique, new concept in children's music, 'Pathways'! Their musical journey together is now blossoming into new genres, including Global, Jazz Fusion and New Age.

**Photo credits: Charu Suri**

## ABOUT COLUMNIST

## JAY PILLAI



Jay Pillai is the founding editor of Lazie Indie Magazine. A musician for 30+ years, with his bands Lazie J, Lazie Bison and the Autumnleaf, Jay has been on the forefront promoting indie music in India and now worldwide. The brain behind the award winning TV show Autumnleaf The Big Stage and the International Indie Music Festival in Kerala, India which has already showcased top Bands from more than 20 countries within 3 years. He also founded the John Anthony Guitar Contest to promote young guitar talent in India and bring them to the notice of legends on International Rock music.

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INTERVIEW

# Johanna St Pierre

# Johanna Saint-Pierre

Soulful Explorer of Sound, Spirit and Self
Interview by Emma Goldberg | Lazie Indie Magazine | May 2025

When it comes to artists, who radiate authenticity, versatility and a tireless passion for music, Johanna Saint-Pierre is a name that immediately rises to the surface. A magnetic force in the indie music world, Johanna has spent years cultivating a sound and style that transcend borders, languages and genres. From the underground clubs of Paris to collaborations with legendary producers across New York and London, her journey is anything but ordinary — it's a vibrant, evolving symphony of soul, jazz, pop, R&B and electronic influences, stitched together by a fearless creative spirit.

Johanna's story begins like many of the greats: With a love for music that took root early. By age 15, she was already writing her own songs, pulling inspiration from a kaleidoscope of iconic figures — from the depth of Prince and the funk of James Brown to the elegance of Aretha Franklin and the sophistication of Serge Gainsbourg. Her love of black American music, jazz harmony and bold pop arrangements, laid the groundwork for a solo career that has remained proudly independent, fiercely original and refreshingly genre-fluid.

With her debut solo project Electronic Superstar in 2000, Johanna planted her flag in the world of electronic house music — and she hasn't looked back since. Now, in 2025, she stands on the cusp of releasing her fifth solo album So Woman, a lush, multilingual fusion of pop, soul, R&B, and jazz that reflects not only her musical evolution, but her journey as a woman, artist and storyteller. Already five singles into the album's release cycle — including the gorgeously emotive Tear Drops and the hypnotic Dans Ma Salle de Bain — Johanna proves she is an artist constantly in motion, always pushing her own boundaries.

But what makes Johanna Saint-Pierre truly remarkable isn't just her sonic breadth — it's her collaborative spirit. A true citizen of the global music scene, she's worked with an impressive roster of producers and musicians, from Jay Rodriguez (known for his work with Prince) to Brian Bacchus (who helped launch Norah Jones) and longtime creative partner Nicolas Bulostin. Whether singing with the Paris Gospel Choir, performing live with her talented band or remixing tracks with international DJs, Johanna brings joy, depth, and intention to every note.

Still, despite her accolades — including an ISSA award for Best International Woman Album — Johanna remains refreshingly grounded. She manages her own career, releases music on independent labels, and prepares each live show with care and dedication. She's an indie artist in the truest sense — unfiltered, empowered and driven by a love for music that borders on the spiritual.

As she sits down with Lazie Indie Magazine once again, Johanna opens up about her creative process, her powerful new album, and the passion that keeps her moving forward. From Paris to the world stage, this is an artist whose heart beats to the rhythm of independence — and whose music speaks to anyone brave enough to follow their own voice.


NIRVANA

**Emma: Hi Johanna, welcome back to Lazie Indie Magazine! Let's jump right in — You've had a long and exciting career in music. How do you see it yourself?**
**Johanna:** I see myself as a free artist — an indie artist who's always followed my musical instinct. I started writing songs at 15, and my solo project, Johanna Saint-Pierre, truly began in the 2000s with my house music vinyl Electronic Superstar. Today, I'm releasing my 5th album — a mix of Pop, R&B, Soul, Jazz and World — and I couldn't be happier.

**Emma: Who are your musical influences, and how did you choose music as your path?**
**Johanna:** I was drawn early to French and English pop, and especially Black American music — Motown, Prince and The Revolution, Bob Marley, Miles Davis, James Brown. I also grew up listening to Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder while playing piano. The Beatles, George Benson, Serge Gainsbourg, Barbara, David Bowie, Quincy Jones, The Cure, Depeche Mode, and Portishead all shaped me. Later, I found inspiration in Amy Winehouse, Alicia Keys and Laura Mvula. I studied jazz in Paris and earned a Master's in Musicology from La Sorbonne.

**Emma: How do you go about creating your music?**
**Johanna:** I'm blessed to work with amazing producers in Paris, New York and London. Together we shape the best songs and sounds for each project. It's a real team effort, but I stay hands-on from writing to final production.

**Emma: Where can people find your music online? And tell us about your latest release.**
**Johanna:** My music is on all streaming platforms, and I sell physical and digital copies on Bandcamp. Right now, I'm releasing singles from my upcoming album So Woman, which drops this September. Each song blends English and French, and it's mainly produced by Nicolas Bulostin, with Jay Rodriguez on three tracks and Marc Ricci on two. So far, I've released It's Snowing Everywhere, Tear Drops, Stuck in a Dream, Mama and Dans Ma Salle de Bain — more are on the way!

**Emma: You've worked with many greats. Who stands out to you most?**
**Johanna:** I've had the honor of opening for The Rolling Stones and Simple Minds. I performed on French TV with Pharrell Williams for Happy. I've worked with Jephte Guillaume, MKL, Louis Cato, Brian Bacchus, Rémi Amblard, Jay Rodriguez and especially Nicolas Bulostin. His support over the last five years has been vital — having a consistent producer changes everything. And I deeply value my live band, who bring my music to life.

**Emma: Do you prefer writing, producing or performing live?**
**Johanna:** I love it all. But if I'm not on stage, I feel empty. If I'm not writing or producing, I feel the same. Music is my life and my addiction — I can't stop!

**Emma: What are your immediate plans for 2025?**
**Johanna:** The So Woman album is my big focus. I'm planning to perform at jazz festivals this summer, and I'll be back at New Morning in Paris this autumn. I'm working on promo and hoping for new opportunities.

**Emma: Of all your collaborations, which is dearest to you and why?**
**Johanna:** I love them all, but my strongest ongoing collaboration is with Nicolas Bulostin. And my live band is essential — Rémi Amblard, Valneze Tala, Marvel Cedric Pitt, Isaac Luyindula, Georges Dieme and Idy Diallo — they're like family.


NEW
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MORNING



**Emma: What's the best advice you've received — and what would you pass on to fellow musicians?**
**Johanna:** Keep going. Keep your independence. I've worked with top remixers like Jim Shaft Ryan, DJ MKL, and great PRs like Muriel Bessman, DJ Ness Afro and Lee Bright. I won an ISSA award and present my work to the French Grammy each year. I manage everything myself, from songwriting to promo, like a one-woman band. Always be ready — I've carried a demo in my pocket since I was 15.

**Emma: What's happened since our last interview?**
**Johanna:** Wow — a lot! I released Just Me, got my ISSA award, played New Morning, did a livestream for Ziana TV, and released five new singles from So Woman. Your last interview really brought me luck, Emma!

**Emma: Any last updates for our readers?**
**Johanna:** Yes! Please follow me, stream my music, and join the community. I'm on Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, Instagram and more. Thank you again, Emma and Lazie Indie Magazine. It's an honor to be here for a second time. Much love! cial

## ABOUT COLUMNIST
## EMMA GOLDBERG



Emma Goldberg is French Pop Singer, Composer, Video Producer, Author writing in Italian, Spanish, English, French. She also is a radio host in Radio 242 UK introducing independent musicians to audiences across UK, France and the nearby countries. Emma has her own radio show called Just like Emma which is maintained here for the column she contributes to Lazie Indie Magazine.



INTERVIEW

# Fernando's Eyes

# Fernando’s Eyes

## FERNANDO HONORATO: THE ARCHITECT OF ATMOSPHERIC SOUNDSCAPES STEPS INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

For nearly two decades, Fernando Honorato has stood at the forefront of atmospheric music as the enigmatic lead vocalist and principal songwriter of Sweden’s acclaimed band Principe Valiente. Since founding the band in 2005, Fernando has consistently carved out a unique sonic identity — one that marries the haunting echoes of post-punk with the immersive textures of shoegaze, the moody undercurrents of darkwave and the ethereal qualities of dream pop. With a voice that resonates in the cavernous space between sorrow and strength, his baritone has become a signature — instantly recognizable and emotionally potent.
The name Principe Valiente, translating to "Brave Prince" in Spanish, is more than just a title. It reflects the romanticism, vulnerability, and poetic depth that have come to define Fernando’s work. Across multiple albums and international tours, he has built a loyal global following — drawn to both the grandeur of the band’s compositions and the emotional honesty embedded in every lyric and melody. Critics have lauded his ability to evoke cinematic landscapes through sound, crafting songs that feel both deeply personal and universally resonant.

Yet, despite the acclaim and the ongoing success of Principe Valiente, Fernando is now stepping into a bold new chapter: His first solo album. Stripped from the familiar framework of his band, this project offers something altogether different — a more intimate, raw, and exploratory journey into the heart of his artistry. If Principe Valiente was about collective atmosphere and shared experience, this solo work promises a quieter but no less powerful introspection. It’s Fernando in his most vulnerable, fearless form.

This new endeavor doesn’t abandon the moody elegance and sweeping emotion fans have come to expect — rather, it refines and reframes them. Here, Fernando leans into experimentation, blurring genre boundaries even further, and revealing facets of himself previously hidden in the shadows of collaborative creation. The result is a body of work that feels like both a continuation and a reinvention: deeply rooted in his musical DNA but open to entirely new directions.

In a time when authenticity is often elusive in the music world, Fernando Honorato remains a rare force — an artist who creates not for trends or algorithms, but from an unrelenting inner impulse to communicate something real. His music speaks in textures and tones, in longing and light, in the quiet revelations that emerge from solitude.

As he sits down with Lazie Indie Magazine, Fernando offers a rare glimpse into his creative process, the emotional landscapes behind his new solo material, and the path that has led him to this transformative moment. Whether you're a devoted follower of Principe Valiente or discovering his work for the first time, this is an artist worth listening to — and a story worth knowing.

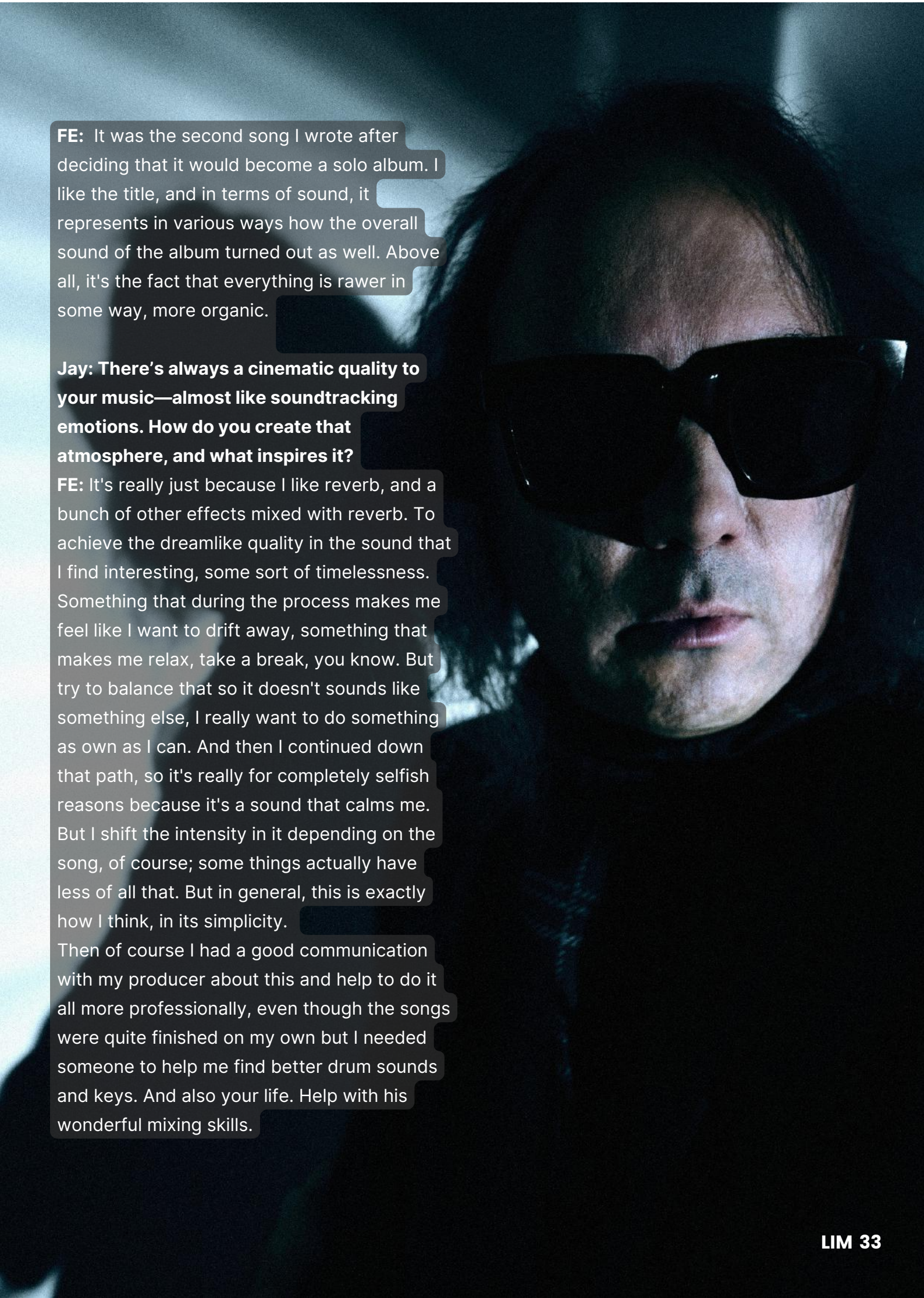


**Jay: Fernando, after so many years fronting Principe Valiente, what drew you toward starting your solo project, Fernando's Eyes?**
**FE:** Well, shortly after the release of Principes' album "Barricades," I already had a number of demos intended to become something for the next album, but they were quite different, and some of them didn't receive any immediate reception within the band. Since the role there has always been to present things, then re-do them if they didn't quite resonate, and then decide whether to keep them, it was quite unfortunately going against the grain here. So after some dialogue, I decided to keep these ideas to myself and see if there's something else I want to do with them in the future. Then during that year (to make a long story short), the atmosphere within the band started to deteriorate more and more, which led me to break it up. But just for a few months, until the guitar player and I reconciled and continued writing again, just the two of us. Which later resulted in the album "In This Light."

**Jay: "A Million Times" struck a chord with many for its emotional depth. What inspired that track, and what does it represent in your journey?**
**FE:** This song was one of the first four (if I remember correctly, time flies since I started this) that I wrote specifically for this. And actually a song that I dreamed. Or at least the chorus of the song.
I've experienced that before, but you know, you wake up and think, right, I dreamed something about a melody and it was really interesting/atmospheric. So after a minute or so, the atmosphere from the dream and any chords or melodies fade away.
But this time I woke up - remembered right away that I had dreams like this before and was determined not to forget it. So I sat down with the guitar and tried to remember what the chords might have been in the whole thing. The chorus then. Managed after a while, got a bit disappointed as it felt so basic, but thought if I keep going it will probably become something a bit more exciting in the end. After a while, I started recording the guitar on the computer, added the vocal melody (without lyrics for now), the synth bass, and the synths. And I actually structured a pretty decent demo in about 5 hours there. Then I realized that I had to get up, take a shower, and take care of everyday life. But a very unique experience to actually follow through with it right away - as soon as I woke up - without putting it off.
Lyrically wise, it's a tribute to recurring feelings (mostly crap) that stand in the way of personal development, but you keep fighting anyway. And try not to lose heart while actually "venting". I believe it's a healthy mix to allow yourself to complain and be concerned about things, but not to give up on one's goals just because of that; it's a part of the process in the struggle for personal development. All emotions are allowed.

**Jay: With Fernando's Eyes, your music feels even more personal and exposed. How has working solo changed the way you write and express yourself?**
**FE:** Actually, not much at all. As I have already mentioned in previous interviews, the main difference has been haven't had to "sell" the idea to anyone else in a band but have just thought that I want to be satisfied myself. It's a strange freedom in that. So it's a bit more real then. And above all, write completely free from whatever genre the song happens to have by the end of the process. I just think it's fun to blur those boundaries, as long as the idea feels personal and honest.

**Jay: Your new single, "Center of Your World," also gives the upcoming album its name. Why was this the song to represent the whole record?**



**FE:** It was the second song I wrote after deciding that it would become a solo album. I like the title, and in terms of sound, it represents in various ways how the overall sound of the album turned out as well. Above all, it's the fact that everything is rawer in some way, more organic.

**Jay: There's always a cinematic quality to your music—almost like soundtracking emotions. How do you create that atmosphere, and what inspires it?**

**FE:** It's really just because I like reverb, and a bunch of other effects mixed with reverb. To achieve the dreamlike quality in the sound that I find interesting, some sort of timelessness. Something that during the process makes me feel like I want to drift away, something that makes me relax, take a break, you know. But try to balance that so it doesn't sounds like something else, I really want to do something as own as I can. And then I continued down that path, so it's really for completely selfish reasons because it's a sound that calms me. But I shift the intensity in it depending on the song, of course; some things actually have less of all that. But in general, this is exactly how I think, in its simplicity.

Then of course I had a good communication with my producer about this and help to do it all more professionally, even though the songs were quite finished on my own but I needed someone to help me find better drum sounds and keys. And also your life. Help with his wonderful mixing skills.

**Jay: Much of your new material seems to explore solitude, longing and inner reflection. Are these themes that emerged naturally, or did you seek them out?**
**FE:** They come naturally, a bit as described above, and its really about wanting to dream away a little, from the stress and often monotony of everyday life, especially these days. But really, I don't feel anything depressive about it, just a break that I need to explore with sound. With the lyrics is almost always things and episodes taken from my own life. Maybe that's depressing, but just for a while. It's mostly processing of old topics.

**Jay: How do you see the current direction of the music world, especially in the indie and post-punk space? Are there shifts you feel connected to—or distant from?**
**FE:** Some things within the post-punk scene unfortunately just reminds of each other, mostly quite uninteresting for me except for a few small gems here and there. As soon as I listen to something that feels and sounds unique, I want to listen to it again and again. And that's exactly the purpose when you discover new music. Just like when others discover mine and I feel flattered when people explain that my music is experienced just like that too.
The indie scene nowadays, which leans more towards the lighter/Popier side, I have even less knowledge of at the moment (for many years), but even there, the same principle applies - if I discover something interesting that really stands out, it's a very pleasant experience.

**Jay: Fernando's Eyes feels deeply rooted in emotion, but also in sonic exploration. What kind of risks or experiments did you take on this album that you hadn't before?**
**FE:** Good analysis, that's really what I feel I do and want to do - to explore. Regardless of genre.
On this album, I felt that I would dare to have a common thread throughout the whole record, even though the different songs can really differ from each other. One with just an acoustic guitar (which I've never released before), mixed with the classic Principe Valiente elements in the form of synth strings, etc. And have the girls back again who have already sung on various albums with Principe. But not repeating myself. I want to be quite precise about that.
Other songs are much more electronic in its nature, but I mainly aimed to make a more organic album that I actually would have wanted to do 20 years ago, if I had known back then how to go about it in terms of recording. And had the self-esteem. And also had the courage to listen more to myself and ignore what others say. Out of fear of risking that nothing gets done at all, since no one wants to make music with a difficult person. Much of that happened in the split that occurred with PV a few years ago. But it was something I had to take a stand on back then, then it worked out and we continued to be a band anyway, even though we do it as a duo now.
I'm happy and satisfied with this release anyway and that it's finally happening now.

**Jay: Are there plans to bring Fernando's Eyes to the stage? What would a live experience of this solo project look or feel like?**
**FE:** There are such plans, and I have looked around a bit with my management and by myself at things I think could be developing, primarily to open for other artists and bigger acts. And especially outside the genre I've been in for the past 15-20 years. It feels like I've done that a bit now and want to explore other possibilities.
How it would happen on stage, I have no idea yet (haven't had time to focus on that yet), but I'm pretty sure I'll do it with a full band. Minimal backtracks, maybe none at all, and possibly just standing for the vocals then. But I don't know, as restless as I can be, maybe I want to play bass too and sing like I use to, maybe even guitars on selected songs.



But we'll see, I haven't started talking to friends and acquaintances about such a possibility and whether people are interested in helping me. I want to have concrete plans for a few gigs before I do it. Then it becomes more of a reality instead of just doing it and rehearsing with people, taking their time for "maybe" play, "sometime," it feels like it could just become unfocused and lack enthusiasm. So I want to do it having something that is set and planned.

**Jay: For new listeners stepping into your world for the first time, what do you hope they take away from this music—emotionally or spiritually?**
**FE:** Preferably, what I experience myself when I discover new artists - peace of mind first and foremost with great melodies. But then also encouragement, and a vent for the listener to feel their own frustrations and dissatisfaction through it? If it can help them get it out in some way, process it, something therapeutic.
Have it like a soundtrack of your life!



INTERVIEW

# Teskey

# Teskey

## A Rocking Blues Band, Release Debut LP, 'White Wolf'

Arizona blues-rockers Teskey released their debut full-length album White Wolf on Friday, May 30, 2025. In the spirit of the late 60's/early 70's British blues rock records, White Wolf fuses elements of traditional blues, psychedelic rock, jazz fusion, delta blues and alternative rock. Recorded at Mind's Eye Studio, in Phoenix, the hard-hitting performances capture the raw energy and power of a live show and the refined sound quality of a modern record.

The band is interviewed here by Lazie Indie Magazine, here's how it went.

**Lazie Indie: Talk about your new album, White Wolf, and discuss a few of the tracks on the album?**

**Brandon Teskey:** Hi, thank you for taking the time to speak with us. We wanted to record a blues rock album the way they did in the 60's, live in the studio, where you can feel the performance. We didn't just want to layer tracks in Pro Tools to a click. We used a lot of vintage equipment and microphones to try and capture those sounds. We wanted to keep it raw and tonally redolent of an old record, but have the sonic quality and crispness of a new album. Much of 'White Wolf' came on the heels of the breakup of my former band, Until the Sun, and my wife's cancer diagnosis. So, a lot of the album was written out of a place of desperation. Some of the songs, like 'Don't Take My Angel' or 'White Wolf' were written directly about my wife's battle and recovery from cancer. Some other songs are about love, infatuation, past heartbreaks, or the duplicity of human nature. The album is very eclectic in essence. It has songs reminiscent of psychedelic British blues rock of the 60s, Delta blues songs done acoustically, alt-rock ballads and traditional slow blues songs.

**Lazie Indie: This one is for Brandon Teskey: What are some differences and similarities, between your new band and your previous project, Until the Sun?**

**Brandon Teskey:** I wrote almost all the songs for Until the Sun, and both groups were/are a quartet with keyboards, but with Until the Sun, we had a female vocalist, with Alyssa singing, so I had to adjust the lyrics, or rewrite them to be from a female perspective. With Teskey, I am doing the lead vocals, so I feel my writing is more genuine and honest. The songs turned out to be a truer final product to what I had first envisioned. Brandon Gaddy is a powerhouse drummer, and Matt Baldwin is both a fierce but intricate bassist, so we have a rhythm section that is far more powerful and hard hitting. And our keyboardist, Peter Murphy, is great at adding layers and harmonies.

**Lazie Indie: Many bands are reporting it's become harder to book gigs, and that many of the venues aren't paying the bands as much as they previously did. What's your thoughts on this?**

**Brandon Teskey**: Unfortunately, with a lot of places, I often think it's who you know to get in the door. Also, I think it depends on the venue and where you're at. I know places like Phoenix, which is largely a metal, hard rock, or country music city, sometimes it's hard to find blues rock bands to match with what we're doing. It seems like a great deal of these old-school traditional blues places aren't around anymore, with a few exceptions. And sometimes it's frustrating, because some of the bigger blues rock names aren't even using opening acts, but every city is a little different.



L**azie Indie: If you could change/improve one thing about the current music industry (recording, touring, etc), what would that one main change be?**
**Brandon Teskey:** Probably to have blues-based music more in the mainstream and new artists, less disposable.

**Lazie Indie: Let's have each band member talk about themselves a little, their backgrounds, etc.?**
**Brandon Teskey:** I was born in California and started playing guitar when I was 11 years old. I gravitated from my parent's music (classic rock) and went down the rabbit hole of exploring the players who influenced my favorite guitarists and musicians, which led me to Chicago, Texas, and delta blues. When I was in high school, I started becoming enamored with blues players with a jazz influence like Scott Henderson and Robben Ford, because they had a harmonic sophistication I loved in their phrasing. So, for years, I studied jazz and fusion and incorporated those ideas into my playing and improvisation. I moved out to Arizona to attend ASU, initially to study music. I joined the military and served as an infantry officer for a few years. I played in numerous bands, including Until the Sun. I started singing initially out of necessity, to do background vocals with Until the Sun, and started taking singing lessons for that. But I quickly realized I can actually do this. I started advancing relatively quickly, completely shattering the glass ceiling of what I thought my limitations were. Then in 2024, when my life was in complete chaos due to my band's breakup and my wife's cancer diagnosis, I formed 'Teskey', with Brandon Gaddy. Soon after, Matt Baldwin and Peter Murphy joined and we started playing shows, recording, and it took off from there.





**Matt Baldwin:** Hello. I was born and raised in Phoenix, AZ. I started music in 5th grade on alto sax then moved to bass in the 8th grade. I'm classically trained in jazz and concert. Peter Murphy: I play the keyboard and sing backup vocals in Teskey. I grew up in Boise, Idaho. Both my parents were musical, and I got my love and appreciation for music from them.

**Brandon Gaddy:** I play drums in Teskey. I was born in Atwater, California and raised in South Dakota. My dad Armon Gaddy was my musical influence in our house growing up. He played guitar. I got my love and appreciation for music from both my parent's wide variety of music around the house. I have played drums now for thirty-one years.

**Lazie Indie: If Teskey could perform on a stage with any band, who might these groups/solo artists be?**

**Brandon Teskey:** For me it would probably be Buddy Guy. I think he's the last of the Chicago blues greats and he was a huge influence on me. I remember seeing him when I was twelve years old and was like, that's what I want to do. I think it would be an honor to play with him. A close second for me would be Clapton. He was one of the first guitar greats I gravitated towards when I started playing and his stuff with Cream, and the John Mayall and the Blues Breakers, is still very influential on me.

**Matt Baldwin:** Buddy Guy or Tinsley Ellis.

**Peter Murphy:** For me Paul McCartney. I grew up listening to the Beatles. In high school, I made a Beatles band with three of my friends.

**Brandon Gaddy:** I'd love to play with Steve Vai, Eric Johnson, Kingfish, Joe Satriani, and/or Eric Clapton.

**Lazie Indie: What's Teskey's five-year plan to become successful?**

**Brandon Teskey:** We are going to promote our album the best we can. I think it is musically the finest piece of work I have done or been a part of. We have an excellent publicist, Doug Deutsch.



We are planning to book some tours and festivals coming up and trying to bring the music to anyone who will appreciate it. We also have written songs for another album which we hope to record in about a year from now.
www.teskeyband.com

## ABOUT COLUMNIST

## JAY PILLAI



Jay Pillai is the founding editor of Lazie Indie Magazine. A musician for 30+ years, with his bands Lazie J, Lazie Bison and the Autumnleaf, Jay has been on the forefront promoting indie music in India and now worldwide. The brain behind the award winning TV show Autumnleaf The Big Stage and the International Indie Music Festival in Kerala, India which has already showcased top Bands from more than 20 countries within 3 years. He also founded the John Anthony Guitar Contest to promote young guitar talent in India and bring them to the notice of legends on International Rock music.



Spotlight

# Viking Queen

SPOTLIGHT

# Viking Queen

NORWEGIAN HEAVY ROCKERS WITH A GLOBAL HEARTBEAT

Viking Queen is a Norwegian heavy-hard rock band that has stormed the international music scene with their electrifying sound, fierce stage presence, and a spirit deeply rooted in the traditions of classic metal. Since their inception in 2016, Viking Queen has evolved from local rock warriors into global ambassadors of powerful, authentic, and meaningful metal music.

Hailing from Norway, a country known for its deep cultural ties to Viking history and black metal, Viking Queen carved a niche by championing classic heavy rock with modern energy. The band was founded by Geir Miranda, a passionate musician and visionary who has since served as the band's driving force and manager. Under his leadership, Viking Queen established their distinct identity, one that blends thunderous riffs with melodic depth, and lyrics that speak to both ancient and contemporary struggles.

## A Breakthrough on National Television

Viking Queen first came into the national spotlight through their participation in the third season of "Norske Rednecks" in 2017. Their appearance on the popular reality show was more than a TV moment—it marked the band's breakout into mainstream awareness. Their music and magnetic stage energy resonated with viewers across Norway, sparking a wave of interest and admiration.

From there, Viking Queen seized the momentum. With a record deal from Sentralforlaget, a respected Norwegian label, they began to release music that quickly earned them critical acclaim. Their early material hinted at the scope of their ambition, but it was through relentless touring and international engagement that Viking Queen truly began to ascend.

## Albums That Roar Across Continents

With two critically acclaimed albums under their belt, Viking Queen has solidified their place in the heavy rock arena. Their music isn't just a tribute to the past; it's a powerful call to the present. Drawing inspiration from classic metal icons like Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, and Dio, while infusing their own Nordic flavor, the band has created a sound that resonates globally.

Their most recent album, "Hail to the King," released in 2023, was a product of the band's resilience and creativity during the pandemic. While the world paused, Viking Queen charged forward. The album showcases a matured band with sharper edges, deeper lyrics and a broadened sonic palette. Songs from the album have found audiences far beyond Norway, charting on specialized rock and metal radio stations in Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and the USA. These accolades are a testament to the band's universal appeal and their ability to transcend language and geography.

## The Global Metalists United Project – Music With a Mission

Perhaps the most impactful chapter in Viking Queen's journey so far is the "We Are United" project—a collaboration that goes beyond music, into the realms of humanitarian aid and global solidarity.

The song "We Are United" was conceived by Geir Miranda, who was deeply moved by the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Partnering with Tim Steinruck from The Mighty One and Jørg Klein, they launched Global Metalists United, a multinational project that brought together 30 musicians from across the globe. Their shared goal was clear: to raise funds and awareness for those affected by the war in Ukraine.




Gibraltar


Gibraltar

This all-star collaboration includes eight guitarists, each contributing their unique flair to the track. The response from the metal community was overwhelming—no artist turned down the invitation, and many more expressed interest than could be included. Among the project's notable supporters are Dave Evans, the original vocalist of AC/DC, and Jon Norum, the legendary guitarist from Europe.

All proceeds from "We Are United" are directed to the Red Cross in Geneva, ensuring that every dollar reaches those who need it most. This initiative reflects Viking Queen's commitment to using their platform for good, uniting the global metal community for a cause that transcends borders.

Worldwide Recognition and Tours

While Viking Queen's roots are proudly Norwegian, their ambitions are unbounded. In 2023, they performed in India at the International Indie Music Festival in Kerala, one of Asia's premier indie music events. Their performance there was met with enthusiastic acclaim, and it marked a major step in the band's mission to connect with diverse audiences.

Shortly after, they headed to the United Kingdom, where they continued to win over fans with their high-octane shows and classic-meets-modern metal sound. Their most recent appearance at the Oppdal Music Festival 2025 was another milestone. Sharing the stage with Sherise D'Souza, a powerful voice from India, Viking Queen delivered a show that brought the crowd to its feet and highlighted the international unity of rock music.

Looking Ahead: A Global Journey Continues

**n**ow entering their most exciting phase yet, Viking Queen is riding high on a wave of international recognition and passion-driven creativity. Their fanbase continues to grow across continents, fueled by the band's dedication to live performance and authentic connection.



More tours are being planned, with stops expected in Europe, Asia and North America, signaling a truly global chapter for the Norwegian rockers.
Viking Queen's commitment to staying grounded in their values while pushing the boundaries of their music makes them a band to watch in the evolving rock landscape. Their shows are not just concerts—they're experiences. The thundering drums, roaring guitars, and soaring vocals, combined with a message of unity and resilience, leave audiences inspired and energized.

A Legacy in the Making
As Viking Queen continues to write their story, one thing is clear: they are not just a band, but a movement. They stand for the timeless power of rock and roll, the ability of music to bring people together, and the responsibility of artists to speak up and act when the world needs it. From Norwegian stages to Indian festivals, from global collaborations to heartfelt activism, Viking Queen is forging a path that blends art with purpose. With new music, tours, and projects on the horizon, the future looks not only loud—but legendary.
Stay tuned. Viking Queen has only just begun to reign.







INTERVIEW

# DALE EDWARD CHUNG

# Dale Edward Chung, By Design

**INTERVIEW BY LYIA META**

Dale Edward Chung has built a career by following his interests and saying yes to opportunity when it knocks. From music to film to sound engineering, his path hasn't been traditional, but it's been deliberate. Raised in the public schools of Oakland and Berkeley, he was exposed to the arts early on and never stopped exploring where creativity might lead him. His experiences span decades and disciplines, but the common thread is a work ethic shaped by curiosity, persistence, and a clear-eyed approach to whatever's in front of him.

I caught up with Dale in Los Angeles during GRAMMY Week, where he was a nominated artist at the 67th awards. In 2025, he was nominated for Best Global Music Performance for his work as a featured artist on Kashira by Masa Takumi — a collaboration that highlights his ongoing contribution to genre-crossing, globally-minded music. It's not his first brush with recognition either. Chung previously won a Latin Grammy Award for his work on the album Buenos Diaz (2019), and received another Latin Grammy nomination in 2020 for Paseo Lunar as a member and producer of Lucky Diaz and the Family Jam Band.

Amid the energy and recognition, it was hard not to notice how few Asian American creatives were present in the spotlight. Dale didn't make a point of it, but it's something he's keenly aware of—as an artist, as a professional, and as someone who understands the long road to visibility.

In conversation, he talks about the many stages of his creative life—from playing with master drummers as a teenager to his long tenure with R&B group Con Funk Shun, and later stepping into the world of acting and directing. He reflects on how his background as a musician informs his work behind the camera, why representation still matters, and how family history has shaped his sense of identity. The conversation doesn't chase big headlines or drama. Instead, it focuses on process, growth, and the kind of steady dedication that often gets overlooked in an industry more interested in overnight success. What emerges is a portrait of an artist who's more interested in showing up and doing the work than in being center stage. What follows is our conversation, lightly edited for clarity and flow.

**LM: Your musical journey began in the public schools of Oakland and Berkeley. How did that early environment shape your passion for music?**
**DEC:** Being exposed to music in schools at a young age really helped to open my mind and create an environment of appreciating the arts. I think it was instrumental in nurturing my passion for music and the arts in general.

**LM: You've performed with master drummers like C.K. Ladzekpo and Malonga Casquelourd. What impact did those experiences have on your approach to rhythm and performance?**
**DEC:** I was in high school when I was blessed to play with those two master drummers. I was in a very developmental stage in my drumming. With CK we learned a Ghanaian song that I still remember the words today. It helped me to understand that the drums and rhythms are speaking a conversation and it's how I approach playing music with a band as well as acting.

**LM: As a former member of Con Funk Shun, how did being part of such a legendary R\&B/funk group influence your musical style?**

**DEC:** Well I don't know that being in the group necessarily influenced my musical style because my style was pretty developed at that point, BUT I grew up on the music of Con Funk Shun, so in that respect, their music influenced my music style greatly. I would say playing with them for 13 years helped to elevate my musicality, how to put on a show for the audience and definitely influenced my professionalism.

**LM: Transitioning from music to film, what inspired you to explore acting and directing?**
**DEC:** I think as a child, I wanted to be an actor first but music at some point, music came to greet me and that is what I focused on until it became a profession. Growing up, I was that kid that never wanted to be just one of the crowd. I wanted to be in the spotlight and music allowed that for me. I'm still that way. When I moved to LA after my stint with Con Funk Shun, I wanted to expand musically into the world of film but soon acting opened its door to me and I walked in to greet it. The directing came about in 2022 when I released several songs as an artist. I released music videos for three of the five songs I released. The first two music videos my friend Stacey Marbrey directed. Stacey is a SAG Award winning director. I produced and conceptualized them. For the third one, "The Beautiful One" I decided to take on the role of director as well and that's how I became a director.

**LM: In the SAG Award-winning film Unspoken, what drew you to that project, and what message did you hope to convey through your role?**
**DEC:** That film was written and directed by my friend, Stacey Marbrey. She was looking for an actor for the male lead and when she described the qualities she was looking for, I said "Me!" That how I got that role. I don't think at the time I was trying to conveyical boundaries in every project. As a full-time performer, she continues to push creative limits and leave her mark across multiple artistic fields.



anything about that role. I honestly hate my acting in it. Stacey disagrees with me, and it went on to win several prestigious awards and then added to the rotation of BET 2 back in the day. I think today the message would be as an AAPI artist, an independent artist, to continue to tell our stories and be represented and normalize our stories and faces on screen.

**LM: Working on Labyu with an Accent alongside Filipino superstars, how did that experience differ from your previous acting roles?**
**DEC:** Working with the cast and crew of Labyu was a huge learning experience. I had a day and a half to learn a song that was written for the film in Tagalog, which I don't speak. The star and director Coco Martin has a very unique directing style called the Brillante method. It's named after director Brillante Mendoza, who Coco started his career with. The part of the method is to not rehearse scenes and let the actors react and behave organically on camera. It's an unorthodox method of directing, very different from any acting experience I had had to date or since.

**LM: You've worked as a production sound mixer on various projects. How does your background as a musician inform your approach to sound engineering?**
**DEC:** Being a musician or really a producer/engineer has been super helpful in working as a production sound mixer on a film set. The technical principles are exactly the same. It's the environment that is different. It's similar to mixing a live album while simultaneously mixing the front of house mix.

**LM: Being part of the Grammy-nominated album *Creciendo* by Lucy Kalantari and the Jazz Cats, what was your role in that project, and how did it challenge you?**
**DEC:** I worked as one of the engineers on "Creciendo". I recorded Mireya Ramos' violin on one of the songs. I think the challenge for me was making sure it was recorded up to Lucy's high standards. I consider my role a small but mighty one.

**LM: As an advocate for Asian American representation in entertainment, what changes have you observed in the industry, and what progress still needs to be made?**
**DEC:** I LOVE that our stories are being told and our roles are being elevated both in front of the mic/camera and behind. There are AAPI superstars especially in music now. I think we need to continue creating and telling our stories. There is still so much work that needs to be done to normalize the faces and stories of people of color in entertainment in the United States. It has been over 100 years of being influenced by negative stereotypes created by a society that has wrongly minimalized and devalued our role and representation. We have to be the ones creating and telling our stories.

**LM: Your grandmother was a "Rosie the Riveter" during WWII. How has your family's history influenced your perspective on representation and storytelling?**
**DEC:** I come from a family of strong resilient women. From my grandmother, who was a single mother of six during the depression to my aunt Maggie Gee, who was one of the first women pilots to fly in WWII and a California Hall of Fame inductee to my mother that gave her family everything to make sure my brothers and I grew up with love and security. My family's history in America is something I am very proud of. We are America and we helped build this country. I always knew I was Chinese but I also knew I was American. American is how I identify myself. There was a time in my life that being Asian was not something I was comfortable with. I'm fifth generation in this country but growing up I never saw role models in film and TV that I could look up to except for Bruce Lee. Even today there aren't that many AAPI role models that are elevated to hero status



Today my goal as a filmmaker is to tell stories where we are represented as part of the mix of people like experienced all of my life. Growing up in the Bay Area, I grew up with an eclectic mix of cultures. It is what I define as American life. The melting pot. I seek that in my life now and that means finding the community of other creatives that want to tell those stories too.

**LM: Your song *The Beautiful One* was featured in a film. Can you share the story behind its creation and its significance to you?**
**DEC:** The Beautiful One was featured in Labyu with an Accent. I sing it before I sing the love song of that film, Habang Buhay, on camera. I wrote it with an amazing guitarist Jordan Hemphill, who also accompanies me on screen in Labyu. It was a song we wrote for my releases in 2022. I think it's somewhat autobiographical. It's basically about an average guy whose confidence makes him shine.

**LM: Collaborating with artists like Masa Takumi on *Kashira*, how do such collaborations come about, and what do they bring to your musical evolution?**
**DEC:** I love collaborations. I always seek them out. I have collaborated with other creatives throughout my history of creating. There is so much beauty that comes from collaboration. I love projects that are somewhat outside of my wheelhouse. There's always growth that happens when I work on projects with artists like Masa.

**LM: You've been described as a "Renaissance man." How do you balance your various roles in the arts, and what drives you to keep exploring new avenues?**
**DEC:** My goal in life is to not die thinking "What if?" I have always followed my interests. It keeps the journey interesting. I say "Yes" more than I say "No" and that has opened up opportunities that I wouldn't have been exposed to otherwise.

**LM: You've mentioned not wanting to "die thinking, 'What if?'" How does this philosophy influence your decision-making in your career?**
**DEC:** It basically means keep an open mind. It influences just about every decision I make. Denzel Washington gave a commencement speech years ago where he talks about the ghosts of our regrets. In the end, we will all be surrounded by the ghosts of our regrets, he tells the students to go do those things you want to do. Try. Because each of those things we never tried because of whatever reason we justified not doing them, will be a regret that will meet us in the end. When we finally meet those ghosts of our regrets, it will be too late. While I've had this philosophy for myself years before Denzel gave that speech, he eloquently verbalized it. It's on YouTube. Look it up. It's very inspiring.

**LM: For aspiring artists juggling multiple disciplines, what advice would you offer to navigate and integrate their diverse passions?**
**DEC**: Hmmm...for me all these things I do, help keep life interesting and also keep food on the table. I treat it like a business. I'd say honestly assess how each thing can connect with the other. Focus on those things that bring the most satisfaction first. Don't take everything on all at once. The many different things I do have come over many years. Breathe and allow yourself to recognize that there are small blessings that happen everyday. Savor them.






**Fun Question:**
**LM: You're given one hour in a supermarket with an unlimited budget — but you can only buy items that start with the letter "C." What's going in your cart?**
**DEC:** Chocolate and Chinese food!

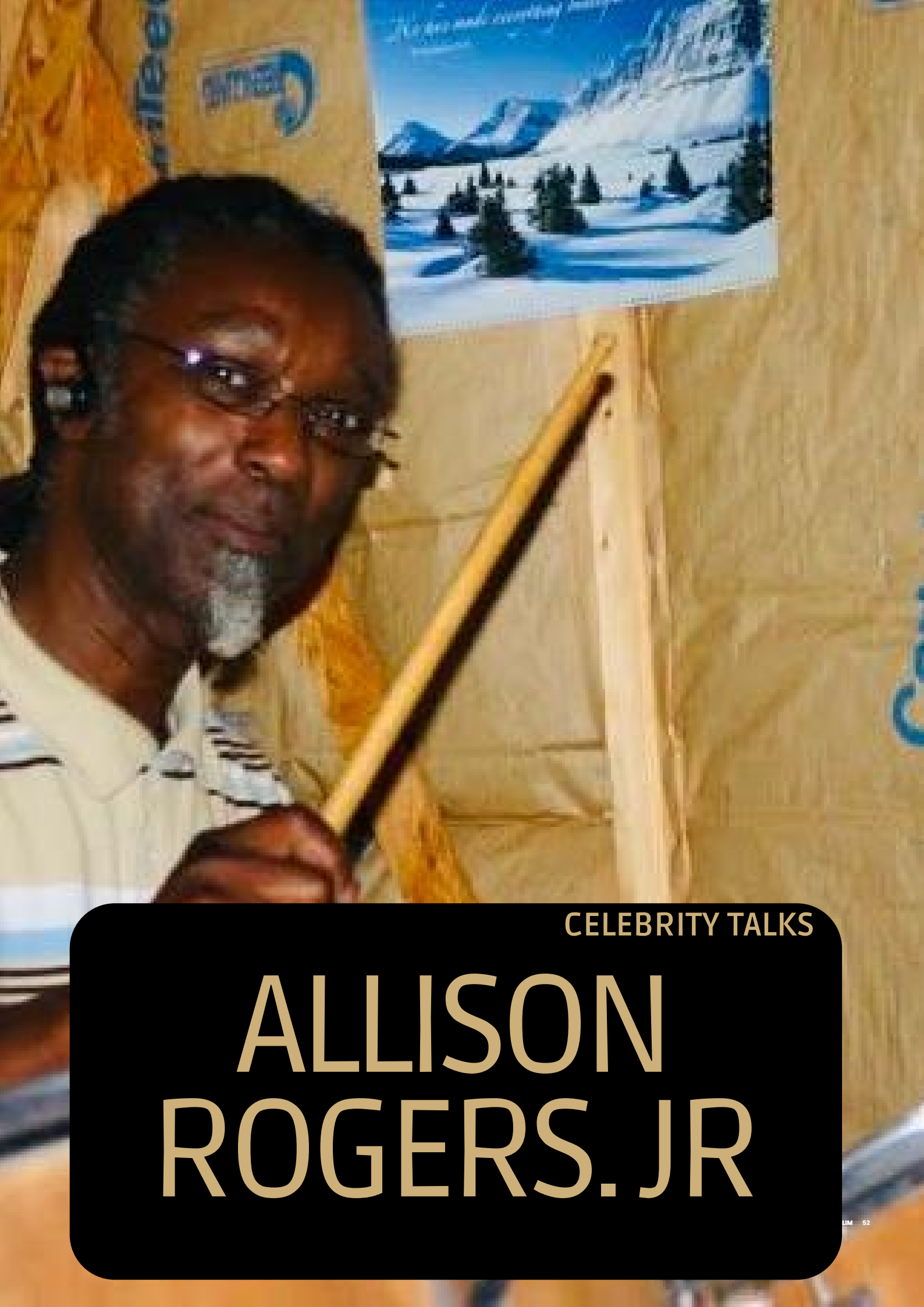
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## ABOUT COLUMNIST LYIA META



THROUGH CORRIDORS is a column by Lyia Meta
"Reflections, insights, and music-centric articles and interviews from around the world—covering anything and anyone that strikes a chord with me." Lyia Meta is a member of The Recording Academy and a GRAMMY® voting member. She is a featured artist on the GRAMMY®-nominated contemporary blues album The Fury (Antonio Vergara) and an internationally acclaimed, multi-award-winning singer, songwriter, producer, and song stylist. Also, an exhibited visual artist, she is a full-time performer who draws deep inspiration from rock and blues while boldly pushing past genre boundaries in every project she takes on."



CELEBRITY TALKS

# ALLISON ROGERS.JR

# Introducing Allison Rogers Jr. — "Bump": A Southern Soul with Global Grooves

**Celebrity Talks** by Ms. Benita

Allison Rogers Jr., affectionately known as "Bump," is more than just a seasoned musician — he's a living testament to the power of passion, perseverance and the soulful spirit of Southern roots. Hailing from Wilmington, North Carolina, Bump embodies the charm and authenticity of Southern hospitality. From an early age, his journey into music has been guided by faith, family and the unshakable rhythm of purpose.

The nickname "Bump" came long before the stage lights and guitars — it was lovingly given to him as an infant, when baby formula caused small bumps on his face. That nickname stuck, and so did the endearing personality that came with it. What also stuck was a love for music that took root during his childhood. At just nine years old, standing in front of a congregation and singing "Away in the Manger," Bump found his calling in the harmony of sound and the joy of performance.

By the age of 15, a guitar found its way into Bump's hands — and never left. From that moment, the musical journey truly began. He didn't simply play — he connected. The people in his community saw his talent, supported his passion, and helped him cultivate a lifelong relationship with music. Influenced by legendary acts like The Four Tops and The Temptations, Bump's sound has always been rich in soul, rhythm, and a touch of nostalgia for what he fondly calls "The Good Ole Days."

Today, Bump is a proud member of the legendary band Mass Production, a group that originally formed in middle school and has since traveled the world, sharing their vibrant music with audiences far and wide. Though the band took a hiatus in the 1980s, it reemerged eight years ago with renewed energy and a revitalized lineup — with Bump as a key player in its rebirth.

With performances across the U.S. — from New Jersey to California and soon Virginia — Bump continues to thrill fans, keeping funk, soul and authentic live music alive. One of the most anticipated events on his calendar is Virginia Beach Funk Fest 2025, where he and Mass Production will take the stage on August 23rd.

More than a performer, Bump is also a mentor and voice of experience. His advice to aspiring artists is rooted in honesty and realism: do it for love, not just fame. Stay grounded, be cautious with your partnerships, and most importantly, have fun. Because for Bump, music has never just been a career — it's a way of life.

**Dr. Benita: Allison where are you from?**
**Bump:** I'm from a place called Wilmington North Carolina. A Southern Guy!! We are full of that Southern hospitality. I loved growing up there!!

**Dr. Benita: Allison what is your nick name and how did you get it?**
**Bump:** I got that nick name when I was a baby in my mother's arms. The baby milk broke my face out in Lil bumps, so that became my nick name Bump lol...

**Dr.Benita: How old were you when you first figured out you loved music?**
**Bump:** I was around 9 years and I was in the church play and I sang "Away in the Manger"! I can remember it like it was yesterday!!



**Dr. Benita: Do you remember when you decided to make music your career?**
**Bump:** I was about 15 years old. I picked up a guitar one day and never put it down. The people in community supported me and my love for the guitar.

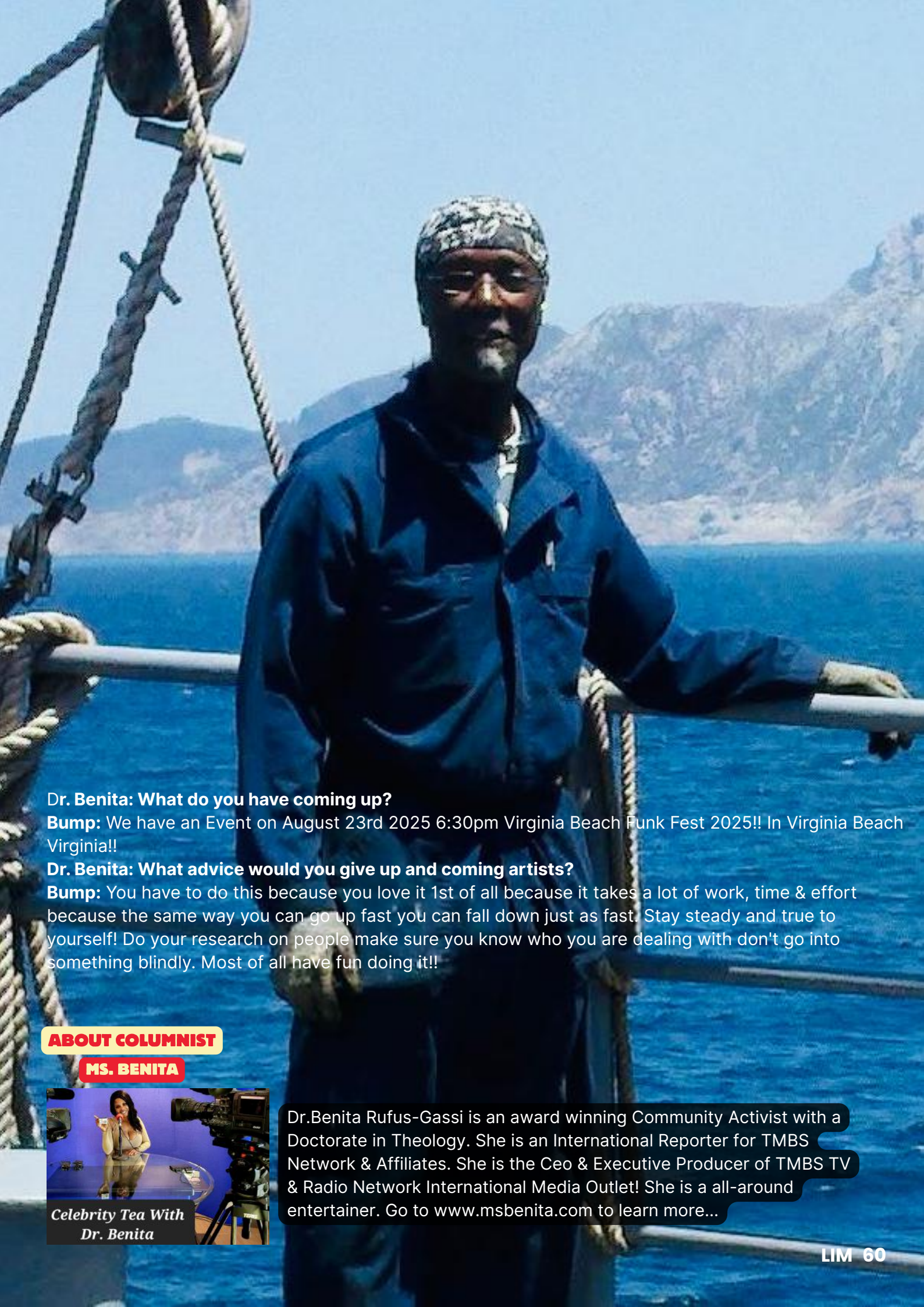
**Dr. Benita: Who were some of your inspirations growing up?**
**Bump:** Oh my gosh there are so many... "The four Tops, The Temptations, Shoot Everyone back than... Those were the "Good Ole Days"...

**Dr Benita: Your in a band tell us a little bit about it?**
**Bump:** The name of the band is "Mass Production"! They started out in Middle school and been together off and on mostly on... every since! They have traveled all over the World performing.

**Dr. Benita: Where are some of the places you performed at?**
**Bump:** Some of the places we have performed are New Jersey, California, Florida, North Carolina & we will be in Virginia in August!!

**Dr. Benita: How did you get in the band "Mass Production"?**
**Bump:** I was in a different band led by the Nephew of lead the singer of the band and he Introduced me to them. They played for many years all over the world!! Around the 80's they broke up. Than 8 years ago they wanted to revive the band and asked me to join and rest is history lol...





Dr**. Benita: What do you have coming up?**
**Bump:** We have an Event on August 23rd 2025 6:30pm Virginia Beach Funk Fest 2025!! In Virginia Beach Virginia!!
**Dr. Benita: What advice would you give up and coming artists?**
**Bump:** You have to do this because you love it 1st of all because it takes a lot of work, time & effort because the same way you can go up fast you can fall down just as fast. Stay steady and true to yourself! Do your research on people make sure you know who you are dealing with don't go into something blindly. Most of all have fun doing it!!

**ABOUT COLUMNIST**

**MS. BENITA**




Dr.Benita Rufus-Gassi is an award winning Community Activist with a Doctorate in Theology. She is an International Reporter for TMBS Network & Affiliates. She is the Ceo & Executive Producer of TMBS TV & Radio Network International Media Outlet! She is a all-around entertainer. Go to www.msbenita.com to learn more...



COLUMN

# Sherise at Oppdal

# Echoes from the Summit: Sherise's Musical Odyssey at Oppdal Rock Fest

My journey to Oppdal Rock Fest began as I first set foot into Gardermoen Airport at Oslo, Norway. The crisp Nordic air embraced me as I stepped off the plane. I am thankful to have experienced a beautiful four-hour drive from the airport to Oppdal. The journey to Oppdal was spectacular! The landscape unfolded in a mesmerizing display— winding roads and endless scenery, each turn revealing a new postcard-perfect view; snow-capped mountains standing tall against a sky that shifted effortlessly between shades of blue and silver, deep fjords glistening under the sun, and charming villages nestled in valleys that whispered stories of old.
As I reached Oppdal, I checked in to my hotel – the Oppdal Turisthotell - Hotel rich in traditions, beautifully located in the center of Oppdal by highway E6 and only 30 meters from Oppdal railway station. Walking into Oppdal Turisthotell, I was greeted by the wonderful and caring hotel staff. My room, cozy yet elegant, framed a stunning valley view. A perfect retreat—comfort, warmth, and scenic mountain views from my window and sumptuous Norwegian style breakfast every day.

Oppdal Rock Fest 2025 Ignited the Mountains At Oppdal, Norway – May 31, 2025 at Trollheimsporten Turistsenter
On the day of the festival, despite a chilly spring day that flirted with winter's return—temperatures hovered around 48°F (9°C) with a light dusting of rain—nothing could cool the fire that burned at Trollheimsporten Turistsenter during the inaugural Oppdal Rock Fest. With rock fans bundled up and ready to rage, the one-day festival delivered a sonic avalanche that echoed through the valley long after the amps went silent.

**Lazy Fifty (13:00 – 13:45)**
Kicking off the festival with a transcontinental punch, Lazy Fifty from New Zealand delivered a gritty, blues-infused rock set that warmed the crowd like a shot of whiskey. Adrian Athy's vocals cut through the cold air with raw emotion, channeling decades of blues tradition into every verse. Jon Payne's basslines rumbled through the festival grounds, a steady undercurrent to the trio's stormy sound, while Jonatan Hamre commanded the drums with precision and ferocity, each beat hammering the energy higher. Their chemistry was electric, their stage presence undeniable. By the time their final chord rang out, the audience was fully charged, ready for the sonic ride ahead—a bold and unforgettable start to a day of music, revelry, and pure talent.

**Triple B (14:00 – 14:45)**
Local heroes Triple B from Oppdal were greeted like royalty. Their set was a celebration of homegrown talent, with Mats Egil Toftaker's vocals soaring over a tight rhythm section. The dual guitars of Elias Sættem and Kjell Arne Busch added melodic depth, while Jan Karsten Einang's keyboard work gave their sound a rich, classic rock texture. The crowd sang along, danced, and cheered the band on with pride.

**Great Tide (15:00 – 16:00)**
From Kristiansund came Great Tide, a band that lived up to its name with a wave of harmonized vocals and layered guitar work. Odin Landbakk and Andreas Friestad traded lead lines and harmonies effortlessly, while Jonas Anker's bass and August Cancino's drumming kept the tide rolling. Their blend of alt-rock and folk-rock vibes brought a dreamy interlude to the afternoon.




ROCK
ROLL
ROLL


HANNJSTU


Trollheimsscenn


Trollheimsscenn


MAPEX
Gibraltar





**Barbed Wire (16:15 – 17:15)**
Barbed Wire from Meldal brought raw intensity to the stage, delivering a hard rock set that was both fierce and unapologetically powerful. Atle Steigedal's guitar work was razor-sharp, each riff cutting through the crisp mountain air with electrifying precision. Svein Erik Syrstad's vocals carried a raw, unrelenting energy, his gritty delivery keeping the crowd locked in from start to finish. Roger Steigedal and Kristian Resell's bass and drum foundation pulsed with a deep, commanding groove, driving the momentum forward with machine-like accuracy. The crowd responded in kind—fists pumped, heads banged, voices roared in unison as the band's sound exploded through the festival grounds. It was the kind of set that left no room for hesitation—a relentless, high-voltage surge of rock that demanded to be felt.

**Tenebris Army (17:30 – 18:30)**
Dark, heavy and hypnotic, Tenebris Army from Gjøvik delivered a super-charged performance that captivated the crowd from the first note. Victor Aannerud's vocals carried a haunting intensity, his guitar riffs cutting through the night like an incantation. Øyvind Wætnes' basslines added weight and depth, while Estin Lapschies' drumming built an atmosphere of tension and release, each beat reverberating through the air. Their fusion of doom and progressive rock swelled into something cinematic—slow, brooding passages giving way to thunderous crescendos, sending chills through the audience. The lights shifted in time with the music, amplifying the mystique of their sound. As the set unfolded, the crowd was utterly transfixed, swaying in unison, lost in the immersive, spellbinding experience that only Tenebris Army could deliver.

**Viking Queen (18:45 – 20:15)**
One of the most anticipated acts of the night, Viking Queen, stormed the stage with Norse fury. Francis Lecquian's vocals were on-point commanded the audience to participate in the show, and the twin guitars of Andreas Wilhelmsen and Lazy X (Lasse Bjerkan) roared like thunder. To add to their thunderous magic, I - Sherise D'Souza joined them in powerfully delivering two of Viking Queen's most popular songs - The title track of their first album - 'Hammer of the Gods', and the second song, 'Fight for Glory' from their second album - 'Hail to the King' blending heavy rock with metal in a cultural crescendo that left the audience breathless. It was a moment of musical fusion that felt both ancient and present and commanded the audience to sing along.












Marshall
MAPEX



**Pornflakes (21:30 – 23:00)**
Closing the night with swagger and style, Pornflakes from Molde brought the party with covers of the greatest rock songs from the 80's! Roy Bøe's charismatic vocals led the charge, backed by Ronny Bergsbakk's groovy bass and Torbjørn Lund's searing guitar solos. Kjetil Remmen's keys added a retro flair, while Kjetil Høyvik's drumming kept the energy high. Their set was a celebration—fun, funky, and full of life.

Throughout the entire festival, creative artist and painter, Unni Befring added an inspiring and magical touch with her festival art which portrayed deep meaning and depth and her artwork went to many new owners. The warm hospitality of Trollheimsporten Turistsenter made everyone feel at home.
With food, drink and even a bar open until 1 am, the festival was more than just music—it was a community gathering and a love, peace and happiness generator.
Oppdal Rock Fest 2025 was a blazing success. Organizers are already dreaming bigger for next year—and if this year was any indication, Oppdal is on its way to becoming Norway's new rock capital. A special shout-out to Bård Vassli, Geir Miranda, Tone Elisabeth Johansen, all the bands, the security teams and all the hotel staff and all the amazing organisers and volunteers for helping to turn this festival into a resounding success.
As I reflect on my time at this extraordinary festival, I am deeply grateful for every moment spent in the company of such warm and welcoming friends. The meticulous planning, the vibrant atmosphere, and the genuine kindness of everyone involved made this experience truly unforgettable. From immersing myself in Norwegian culture to making my dream come true of performing as part of 'Viking Queen' on stage to discovering the breathtaking beauty of Oppdal, every aspect of this journey has been nothing short of magical.
The music, the art, and the shared passion created an environment filled with energy, creativity and pure joy. Every snapshot I took is worthy of a postcard, capturing the essence of this heavenly mountainous retreat. More than just a festival, Oppdal Music Fest has been a celebration of community, love and artistic expression.

I leave with a heart full of gratitude, newfound friendships, and invaluable lessons that have enriched my perspective. This experience has been transformative, instilling in me a deeper sense of connection and wisdom. I sincerely hope to return, to once again be part of this beautiful gathering and contribute to its spirit of love and harmony. Until then, I carry its essence with me—an enduring inspiration that will stay forever cherished.

## ABOUT COLUMNIST SHERISE



'Sherise's Spotlight' is a column by Sherise D'souza - an internationally acclaimed vocalist, songwriter, and a super-charged live performer versatile in many genres who wins multiple awards, globally on an annual basis. Sherise is also a Recording Academy Voting Member and Country Music Association (CMA) Industry member as well as an accredited vocal coach/trainer.



# DAIRA

# Daira

REDEFINING ROCK, ONE EXPERIMENT AT A TIME"

Daira is a genre-defying art-rock band from Mumbai that thrives on evolution and fearless experimentation. Since their formation, they've resisted being boxed into one sound, constantly shapeshifting through rock, folk and improvised sonic explorations. Known for merging poetic Hindi and Urdu lyricism with gripping instrumentals, Daira's music is both visceral and cerebral—anchored in emotion, but never predictable. Their commitment to honest expression over polish is what makes them stand out. Whether through the satirical bite of a visual like Talwaar or the raw spontaneity of a fully improvised album like Vipreet Buddhi, Daira remains committed to breaking boundaries—true to the meaning of their name, which literally translates to "boundary."
Their collaborative spirit and genre-fluid approach have led to projects like Jaadoo Bastar, where tribal rhythms from Bastar met Daira's electric energy, resulting in an immersive audio-visual performance experience. The band's lineup changes over the years have only further enriched their sound, with each new member adding a fresh layer of personality and musical flavor. What ties it all together is the band's unshakeable trust in intuition, live chemistry, and a desire to go wherever the music takes them.
Now, in this exclusive conversation with Lazie Indie, Daira dives deeper into the stories, risks, and relationships that continue to shape their sonic journey.

**Jay: Daira's sound keeps evolving. What usually sparks a shift in your musical direction?**
**Aditya Ranga (Drummer):** Most of our songs have emerged from our jam sessions. With many lineup changes over the years, each member has brought their own energy, musical tastes, and playing style to the table. It's this mix of individuality and collaboration that shapes the sound of our band—and the result is the music we've released so far.

**Jay: What inspired Talwaar, and how did its themes come together during the writing process?**
**Shivam Pant (Guitars):** The idea started long back in 2016 in a jam room. The fire starter was a groovy bassline (played by Govind Gawli) that you hear in the beginning of the track. Then a year back we started working on this again and made some creative changes to the track which is what you hear in the studio recording now.

**Jay: The Talwaar video, directed by Barun Kashyap and starring Hiyaan, adds a strong visual punch. How did the idea come about, and what was the collaboration like?**
**Pratyay Mishra (Guitars):** The ideation started after we made Barun Kashyap hear the track. He explained his vision through his narrative complimenting the sound of Talwaar, after which we were eagerly onboard the idea of showing power dynamics in a satirical setup. In this collaboration, Hiyaan has played the role of a young schoolboy being bullied very naturally.

**Jay: You often use Hindi and Urdu poetry in your lyrics. What draws you to that style?**
**Piyush Kapoor (Vocalist):** Hindi and Urdu come very naturally to us—especially to me, since I was born and brought up in Lucknow. That makes it easy for me to write in these languages. It becomes easier for us to convey our message this way and the softness of Urdu balances the sarcastic tones of our lyrical ideas.



**Jay: How did the Jaadoo Bastar project shape your view on collaboration and experimentation?**
**Aditya Ahir (Bassist):** Experimentation and collaboration have always been Daira's core principles. Our goal with every performance, every jam is to find something unique that will develop our sound as a unit. Jaadoo Bastar put that whole philosophy into overdrive. It has really opened our minds in terms of accommodating more voices into our sound and evolving it further. Every performance of Jaadoo Bastar pushes us to be more creative to bridge the sound of Bastar with our sound, and as a result, we are all musically communicating better than ever.

**Jay: What's the boldest creative risk Daira has taken so far — and what did you learn from it?**
**Piyush Kapoor (Vocalist):** The boldest creative risk taken by Daira was the recording of our second album, Vipreet Buddhi in 2017. The entire album was recorded in the studio without any preconceived riffs, ideas or lyrics, and everything that you hear on the record is completely improve. From this, we learnt that we do not need to overthink what is being composed—just execute the ideas that are being formed, even in a time crunch.






Artist: **Marsden Webb Release Date: June 20th, 2025**
Genre: **Ambient Blues**
Label: **Music For Sport**
Digital Overview London Blues is a unique collaboration between composer **Simon Webb** and iconic blues guitarist **Bernie Marsden**, together known as **Marsden Webb**. The genesis for the album was the music the pair created in 2003 for the play Henry V at the National Theatre, under the direction of **Sir Nicholas Hytner**. Blending the emotional depth of blues with the atmosphere and nuance of a theatrical score, LONDON BLUES is a powerful instrumental album that captures the soul of the city and the spirit of the stage. From its theatrical roots to its studio development, the music evolved over many years, with Simon and Bernie continuing to shape it together until Bernie's untimely passing in 2023. Now, it is finally being released: A poignant celebration of friendship, creativity and enduring musical chemistry.
**About the Album** The music began life in rehearsals for this groundbreaking production of Henry V, with Simon Webb and Bernie Marsden performing live in the theatre. By the time Bernie and Simon performed at the National Theatre, they had already collaborated on many projects including Hollywood films, British TV and session work. The result is LONDON BLUES: Ambient, spacious and richly melodic. Marsden's unmistakable guitar voice winds through Webb's evocative textures, drawing on blues, folk and minimalist influences to create something quietly timeless. This isn't a soundtrack, but a reimagining: music born in theatre, refined in the studio and living fully as an album.




**RENE BENTON CRACKS BILLBOARD/LUMINATE HOT 100 ROCK SONGS CHART AT #55 WITH "LOVE IS PAIN"**

OMAHA, NE – June 18, 2025 – Shred maestro and genre-defying guitar innovator **Rene Benton** has officially landed at #55 on the Billboard/Luminate Hot 100 Rock Songs chart with his electrifying single, "Love Is Pain," taken from his newly released live album, "2 Live in O-Ma-Haw; Lyvv in Omaha," out now on MTS Records.

Benton's chart breakthrough is a landmark moment in his career, capturing the raw, high-octane energy of his live performance while connecting with a wide audience through the song's unflinching emotional edge and jaw-dropping musicianship.




**CHART-TOPPING J-POP ARTIST OLIVIA MILLIN PREMIERES TRIUMPHANT "TTYL" MUSIC VIDEO**

NEW YORK, NY/SARASOTA, FL – June 20, 2025 – Fresh off consecutive No. 1 iTunes J-Pop wins in the UK and United States, 20-year-old singer-songwriter **Olivia Millin** unveils the official music video for her empowering single "TTYL" today. Shot beneath the neon blaze of Times Square and directed by Zane of Zane Productions, the clip translates the track's message of self-respect and liberation into a vivid street-dance celebration.

Watch "TTYL" at https://youtu.be/vBRG9tuKZxU.

"'TTYL' is about telling toxic people that their time in your headspace is over," Millin explains. "I wrote it as a letter to my past self—an anthem for anyone ready to choose self-love over someone else's emotional baggage."




## CLIFF & SUSAN EARN TOP HONORS AT 2025 ARKANSAS COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS

Arkansas married country duo **Cliff & Susan** are riding high after a standout night at the 8th annual 2025 Arkansas Country Music Awards, where they took home three major awards: Entertainer of the Year, Vocal Duo/Group of the Year, and Album of the Year for their fan-favorite release, Fiddle & Keys.

Held during a red carpet celebration of the state's musical legacy, the annual ceremony shines a spotlight on both emerging talent and established artists in Arkansas' thriving country music scene. Cliff & Susan's sweeping wins affirm their growing impact in modern country music.

"This is such an incredible moment for us," said Susan Erwin Prowse after the show. "To receive this kind of recognition from our home state means everything. We're deeply humbled and grateful."



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