

LAZIE

INDIE MAGAZINE

EDITION 71
MARCH 2026

INTERVIEWS & FEATURES

ANTHARIKSH
IYKKI BERRY
RAJESH HEBBAR
BOBBY DIRNINGER
RICK MONROE
GLENN MILLIGAN
AMAN MAHAJAN
NORTH "2UNES" WOODALL

EVENTS

CARMELIA TALES

COLUMNS

JUSTUS DANIEL

**JOHN ANTHONY GUITAR CONTEST
WINNER**

THROUGH CORRIDORS

**THE QUIET BURNOUT BEHIND
THE HUSTLE**

LAZIE INDIE EDITORIAL

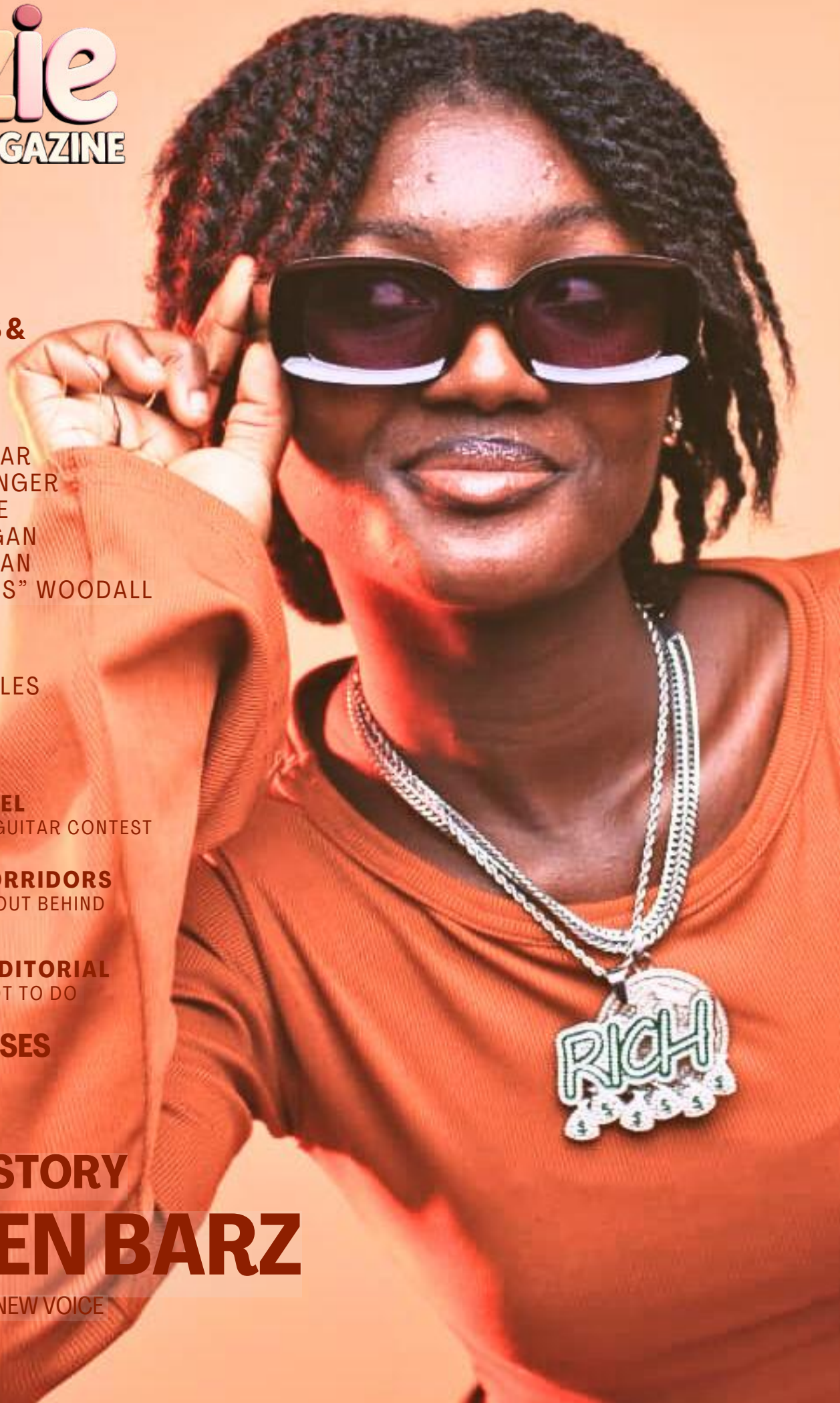
ON A ROLL - A LOT TO DO

NEW RELEASES

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Queen Barz



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EDITORS COLUMN

MORE THAN HUMBLING

INTERVIEWS

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JOHN ANTHONY GUITAR CONTEST
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COVER STORY

Queen Barz

Lazie Indie Magazine

“More Than Humbling”



March feels different.

Not louder, not bigger—but deeper. More meaningful. The kind of moment that makes you pause, look back, and quietly take it all in.

This month, Lazie Indie Magazine proudly features its first-ever cover artist from Ghana—our first from Africa. And while we’ve celebrated many incredible African artists in our pages before, this feels like a turning point. A moment that goes beyond a cover. A moment that, for me, feels incredibly personal.

I often think about where this all began—not as a publication, but as a simple, stubborn belief. A belief that independent artists, no matter where they come from, deserve to be seen, heard, and celebrated without bias. To now witness this platform grow into something that connects voices from across continents... it is more than humbling—it truly amazes me.

The idea that someone who was simply an independent musician a few years ago could build something that now reaches artists across the world still feels surreal. And I’ll say this with complete honesty: this is a proud moment for me. Because this cover isn’t just about geography—it’s about possibility.

What makes this even more special is the contrast and balance we continue to celebrate. This edition, like always, brings together some truly phenomenal artists from across the spectrum. And while this month we shine a light on an upcoming artist from Ghana, just last month we featured Grammy-winning artists, fresh from the global stage. That contrast is exactly who we are—a platform where emerging voices and global icons exist side by side, without hierarchy, without bias—only music.

Jay Pillai

Editor-in-Chief
Lazie Indie Magazine

Lazie Indie Magazine

“More Than Humbling”



With this, Lazie Indie Magazine truly becomes what it always aspired to be—a global space. A space where stories travel freely, where music transcends borders, and where talent is recognized for what it is, not where it comes from.

At the same time, our journey with Carmelia Tales continues to unfold in the most beautiful way. What started as an idea has now grown into something rich, immersive, and deeply human. Our recent collaboration with the legendary Indian band 13 AD was nothing short of magical. The interview and music session carried a rare kind of honesty and energy—one that reminded us why storytelling matters.

And the story doesn't end there.

We're incredibly excited to share that this experience is now evolving into a film—an extension of Carmelia Tales that will capture these moments in a more lasting, cinematic form. It's a new chapter for us, and one we're stepping into with both excitement and gratitude.

This edition is a celebration—but also a reflection. Of growth, of belief, and of the quiet persistence it takes to build something meaningful.

From one independent voice to a global chorus—this journey has just begun.

And if March is anything to go by, the best is still ahead.

Thank you
Jay Pillai

Jay Pillai

Editor-in-Chief
Lazie Indie Magazine



Cover Story

QUEEN BARZ

GHANA'S BOLD NEW VOICE

Queen Barz

Rising with Confidence: Queen Barz's Journey from Ho to the Spotlight

Queen Barz is steadily carving out her space in the vibrant landscape of Ghanaian music, bringing a refreshing blend of confidence, storytelling, and rhythm to every track she releases. Hailing from Ho, Ghana, the rising artist—often stylized as QUEEN BARZ GH—has emerged as a dynamic voice within the Afro-pop, Afrosounds, and hip-hop scenes. With a sound that fuses catchy melodies and powerful lyrical delivery, she represents a new generation of artists unafraid to be expressive, authentic, and bold.

From an early age, Queen Barz demonstrated a natural flair for performance, most notably during her appearance on the popular Ghanaian platform Talented Kids. That moment proved to be more than just a stage—it was a turning point. It introduced her talent to a national audience and instilled in her a sense of discipline, confidence, and purpose. What began as passion quickly evolved into a clear calling, laying the foundation for the artist she continues to grow into today.

The name “Queen Barz” itself carries a story rooted in recognition and identity. Inspired by a devoted fan who admired her lyrical strength and commanding presence, the name was embraced by her audience and team alike. Today, it stands as a symbol of empowerment, creativity, and self-belief—values that are deeply embedded in her music and artistic vision. True to the name, Queen Barz delivers verses with conviction, always striving to communicate meaningful messages while staying true to her core.

Musically, her style is best described as energetic, expressive, and real. She effortlessly blends strong rap flows with relatable themes, creating songs that resonate with listeners across different backgrounds. Whether she is reflecting on personal growth, sharing life experiences, or drawing inspiration from the world around her, her music remains grounded in authenticity. Tracks like “Prayer” and “Lane” highlight her journey, capturing both her struggles and determination while showcasing her evolving artistry.

Her creative process extends beyond the music itself. Queen Barz is actively involved in shaping the visual storytelling of her work, collaborating closely with her team to ensure that every video reflects her message and personality. For her, visuals are not just an addition—they are an extension of the narrative, offering fans a deeper connection to her songs.

Like many emerging artists, her journey has come with lessons—patience, consistency, and resilience being among the most significant. Yet, it is her unwavering passion for music and the encouragement from her supporters that continue to fuel her drive. She is particularly motivated by the desire to inspire young girls to believe in themselves, embrace their voices, and pursue their dreams without fear.

As she continues to grow, Queen Barz remains focused on expanding her reach, refining her craft, and representing Ghana on larger platforms. With more music, stronger performances, and exciting collaborations on the horizon, she is undoubtedly an artist to watch.

This exclusive introduction to Lazie Indie Magazine would not have been possible without the support of Marvin Seramulu, whose efforts in connecting Queen Barz with the magazine are deeply appreciated. His contribution has helped bring this inspiring story to a wider audience.

In this interview with Jay Pillai, we take a closer look at the journey, inspirations, and aspirations of Queen Barz—a rising force whose voice is only just beginning to be heard.



Jay: You first captured national attention on TV3's Talented Kids Season 11. What was that experience like for you, and how did it shape the artist you're becoming today?

Queen Barz: Being on Talented Kids was a very important moment in my life. It was the first time many people in Ghana saw my talent. The experience taught me to be confidence and discipline at a young age. Performing on that stage made me realize that music is not just something I love, but something I want to pursue seriously. It shaped me into the artist I am today because it showed me the power of believing in myself and working hard.

Jay: Many people first knew you as the "Queen of Bars." How did that name come about, and what does it represent for you as an artist?

Queen Barz: The name Queen Barz actually came from a big fan who happens to be part of my team now. The fan and the audience noticed my strong lyrics and confidence when I performed, so they actually accepted the name Queen Barz and I'm still using it till now. For me, the name represents strength, creativity and confidence. It reminds me to always preach powerful message and stay true to myself.

Jay: Your style has caught the attention of people of all ages. How would you describe your sound?

Queen Barz: I would describe my sound as energetic, expressive and real. I like to combine strong rap bars with relatable messages that people can connect with. What makes my style unique is that I focus on storytelling and confidence in my delivery.





Jay: What are some of the biggest lessons you've learned since stepping into the music industry?

Queen Barz: One of the biggest lessons I've learned is patience and consistency. The music industry is not always easy, but success comes with time and hard work. I've also learned the importance of improving my craft, listening to feedbacks, and staying focus on my goals.

Jay: Where do you usually find inspiration when writing your songs?

Queen Barz: I find inspiration from real-life experiences, emotions and things happening around me. Sometimes it comes from personal moments, and other times from stories I hear from people. I also get inspired by the beat itself. When I hear a beat that connects with me, the lyrics starts flowing naturally.



Jay: How involved are you in the creative direction of your music videos?

Queen Barz: I'm very involved in the creative process of my visuals. I like to share ideas about the concept, the message, and the overall look of the video. For me, visuals are another to tell a story behind the song. Working closely with my team helps make sure the video truly represents my music and personality.

Jay: What motivates you as a young female artist in Ghana?

Queen Barz: What motivates me is my passion for music and the support I get/receive from people who believe in me. I also want to inspire other young girls to believe in their dreams and not to be afraid to express themselves. Challenges will always exist but they only make me stronger and more determined to succeed.

Jay: What does your fan support mean to you?

Queen Barz: The support means a lot to me. Knowing that people of different ages connect with my music is very encouraging. It motivates me to keep improving and giving my best. Through music, I hope to inspire people to be confident, stay true to themselves, and never give up on their dreams.

Jay: What can fans expect next from Queen Barz?

Queen Barz: Fans can expect more music, stronger performance and creative projects from me. I'm working on reaching a wider audience. My goal is to grow as an artist, collaborate with great musicians and represent Ghana proudly on bigger platforms in the future.





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.



YKIKI BERRY

CULTURE. COURAGE. CROWN:



IYKKI BERRY

Unapologetic. Unconventional. Unstoppable: lykki Berry speaks to LIM

lykki Berry stands as one of the most compelling voices in India's independent music movement—a rare artist who seamlessly blends intellect, identity, and innovation into a sound that is both deeply rooted and globally resonant. Often regarded as the “Queen of Independent Music” in India, she represents a new era of Tamil-English artistry that transcends borders, genres, and expectations.

Hailing from Tamil Nadu, with strong cultural ties to Thanjavur, lykki Berry's music carries the weight of history while moving with the pulse of modern hip-hop. Her work is not just about rhythm and rhyme—it is about storytelling, philosophy, and reclaiming narratives. Drawing from Tamil literature, heritage, and lived experience, she crafts music that feels both ancient and futuristic at once. Tracks like *Ithihasam* have cemented her reputation as an artist unafraid to explore themes of identity, resilience, and empowerment, while her latest release *Papi* (2026) showcases her ability to experiment with sound and visual storytelling in bold, unconventional ways.

What sets lykki Berry apart is not just her artistry, but her journey. Transitioning from a medical professional to a full-fledged independent artist is no ordinary path. Yet, in many ways, the two worlds are connected—both require discipline, purpose, and a deep understanding of human experience. Where medicine heals the body, her music speaks to culture, voice, and identity.

Her impact has not gone unnoticed. Recognised by Amazon Music as one of India's Breakthrough Artists to Watch in 2025, lykki Berry has steadily built a global presence. From stages in India to international platforms like Indigo at The O2 in London, her reach continues to expand, carrying Tamil hip-hop to audiences far beyond its origins. With a growing catalogue across streaming platforms and an evolving live performance energy, she is part of a generation redefining what it means to be an independent South Indian artist in a global landscape.

Beyond music, she is also the founder of Berry Glow Aesthetics, balancing entrepreneurship with artistry—another reflection of her multidimensional identity. Whether in a clinic or on stage, she embodies discipline, confidence, and vision.

At the heart of it all is a mission: to break stereotypes, especially for women in music. In an industry that has long imposed limitations, lykki Berry challenges norms with every verse, every performance, and every decision to remain independent. Her journey is not just personal—it is symbolic of a wider movement where artists are reclaiming their voices and rewriting their own narratives.

In this exclusive conversation with Lazie Indie Magazine, interviewer Jay Pillai sits down with lykki Berry to explore her transformation, inspirations, and the legacy she is building—not just as an artist, but as a force of change.





Jay: Stethoscope to the studio—what was the exact "click" moment when the Doctor became the Queen?

Iytki Berry: There wasn't a single dramatic moment. It was a realization that kept growing louder than the stethoscope in my ears. Medicine taught me how to heal bodies. Music showed me how to heal voices and stories that were never heard. The "click" happened when I understood that my purpose wasn't just to diagnose illnesses - it was to diagnose culture, speak truth, and move people. The doctor never disappeared; she simply evolved into a different kind of healer.

Jay: Lazie Indie has a history of interviewing incredible artists from Thanjavur. How do those roots influence your global hip-hop flow?

Iytki Berry: Thanjavur is not just a birthplace - it is a cultural archive. When you grow up around temples that are centuries old, rhythm is everywhere - in classical poetry, temple chants, and storytelling traditions. My hip-hop travels the world, but its roots remain deeply Tamil. Poets like Avvaiyar and Kabilar used rhythm, wit, and philosophy to communicate ideas centuries ago. In many ways, that spirit is the original form of rap. I see myself as continuing that lineage in a modern voice.

Jay: If Avvaiyar and Velu Nachiyar were front-row at your show, which track would make them proudest?

Iytki Berry: If Avvaiyar and Velu Nachiyar were sitting front row at my show, I think the tracks that would make them proud are "Thalayaatti Bommai," "Ithihasam," and my upcoming literature-inspired night tracks. Those songs carry the spirit of Tamil storytelling, history, and philosophical reflection. They are reminders that hip-hop doesn't have to abandon heritage - it can amplify it.

ROYAL
ENFIELD

Hunter Hood



Jay: When you walk into a male-dominated rap room, what's the internal mantra you keep on repeat?

lykki Berry: When I walk into a male-dominated rap room, I remind myself of one thing: I am not here to compete for space. I am here to redefine it.

My mantra is simple - knowledge is power, and preparation is armor. When your pen is sharp and your vision is clear, respect becomes inevitable.

Jay: London's Indigo at The O2 is a long way from home. What grounds you there?

lykki Berry: When I travel far from home - even to a stage like Indigo at The O2 in London - what grounds me is Tamil literature. I often listen to Tamil audiobooks before a performance. It's a habit that began with my grandmother. When I was a child, she used to tell me old Tamil stories and lull me to sleep. I still carry her 70-year-old bangles and her wedding ring, and I wear them whenever I perform. They remind me where I come from.

Jay: Your 2026 single Papi is a total mood. How would you describe this era?

lykki Berry: "Papi" is a romantic track, but visually it lives in a completely different universe. The song blends romance with science-fiction imagery - alien aesthetics, futuristic visuals - while still celebrating femininity, personality, and individuality.

That contrast reflects who I am as an artist: romantic yet unconventional, feminine yet futuristic.

Jay: Why choose the indie path in a playback-driven industry?

lykki Berry: Being a doctor taught me precision and responsibility. Standing on stage demands the same discipline - but with emotional power and intensity. As an independent artist, the responsibility is even greater because your voice is truly your own.

And when many children look at you as their inspiration, every word and action carries weight.

Independence isn't just freedom - it is accountability.

Jay: How do you balance being a founder and an artist?

lykki Berry: Running Berry Glow Aesthetics requires clinical discipline and responsibility. Performing on stage requires emotional strength and presence. Both roles demand focus, dedication, and leadership.

The transition is not difficult because the foundation is the same - excellence.

Jay: What's your vision for the next year?

lykki Berry: If something is truly impossible, I don't keep it as a goal. I believe goals should be ambitious but achievable through dedication. My vision is to continue expanding Tamil hip-hop globally while building a space where more independent artists can rise with confidence.

Jay: What legacy do you want to leave behind?

lykki Berry: People often call me unique, and my fans lovingly call me the "Queen of Independent Music." But for me, the real legacy is not the title - it is breaking stereotypes, especially for women. For a long time, women in music were expected to fit into comfortable boxes - to sound a certain way, look a certain way, or remain in the background. I refused that script. I wanted to show that a woman can be intellectual, stylish, fierce, poetic, and powerful all at once.

Hip-hop especially has been a male-dominated space. Walking into that world as a woman requires courage, but staying there requires conviction. I hope my journey tells young women that they do not need permission to lead, to speak loudly, or to occupy space. My dream is to open the gates of the fort for many others - especially women who feel their voices are too different or too bold. Every generation needs someone who breaks the mold so the next generation doesn't have to fight the same battles. If the name lykki Berry stands for anything, I hope it stands for this: a woman who refused to shrink and is standing tall.

The “Lazie” Quick-Fire Round

Jay: Vinyl or Streaming?

lykki Berry: Vinyl for the soul. Streaming for reach.

Jay: Lyrics first or Beat first?

lykki Berry: Lyrics first. Words create the universe.

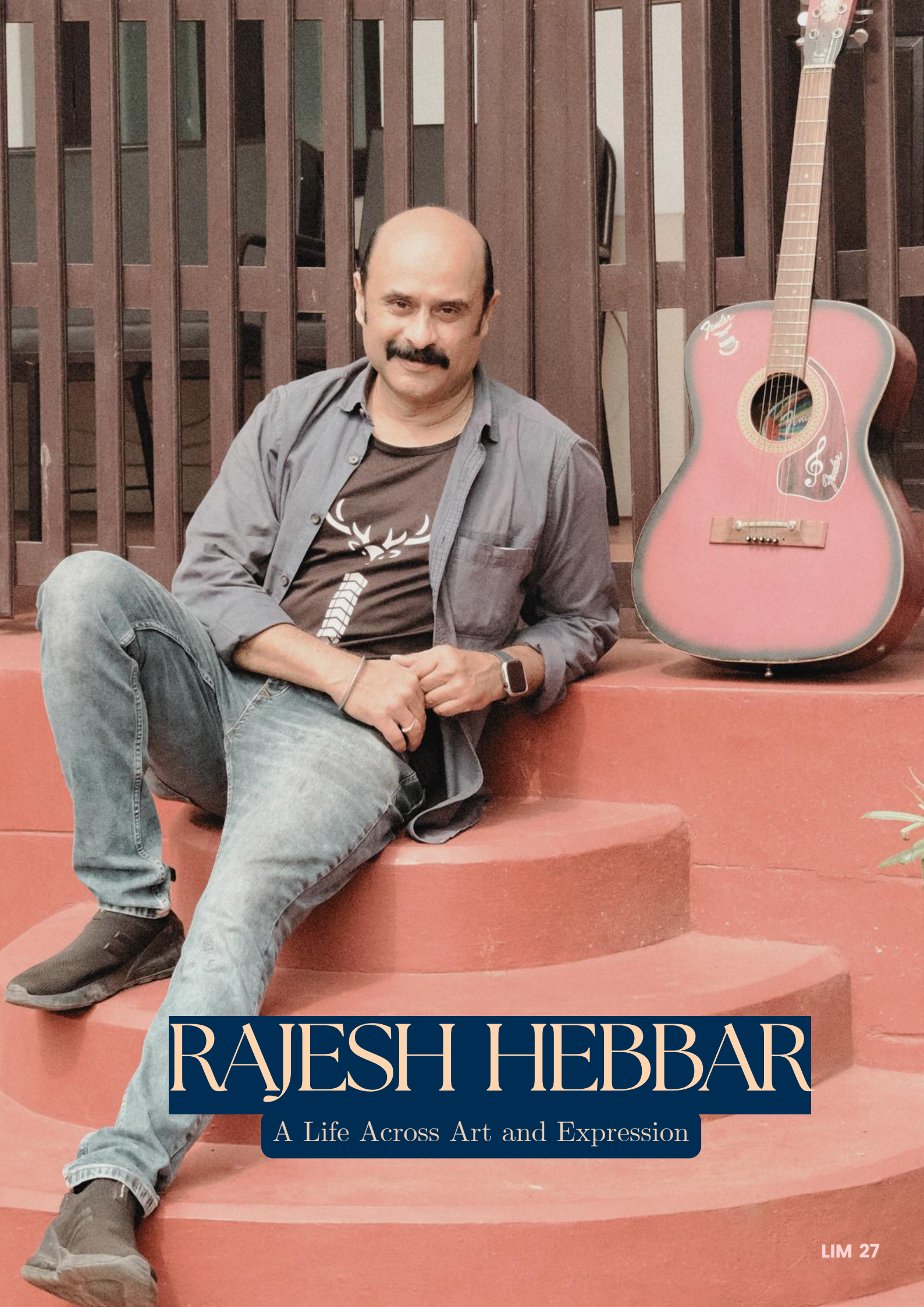
Jay: Chennai filter coffee or London tea?

lykki Berry: Neither. I’m a teetotaler - I drink plain milk.

Jay: One word for your fans?

lykki Berry: Revolution





RAJESH HEBBAR

A Life Across Art and Expression

RAJESH HEBBAR

The Artist Behind the Transitions

As Lazie Indie Magazine continues its discovery journey into the roots of independent music across the small state of Kerala — following our recent conversations with 13 AD—we turn our attention to another compelling figure from Kerala’s evolving cultural landscape: Rajesh Hebbbar. Before becoming a familiar face in Malayalam cinema and television, Hebbbar was part of a movement that quietly shaped the state’s alternative music scene. As the frontman of the rock band Primitive Knights, he stood at the intersection of rebellion, rhythm, and regional identity at a time when independent music in Kerala was still finding its voice.

Born on 18 November 1967 and raised in Palakkad, Rajesh Hebbbar’s journey is anything but linear. A graduate of Victoria College, his early creative pursuits spanned writing, performance, and music. His involvement with Primitive Knights positioned him within a niche yet passionate underground scene—one that drew from global rock influences while navigating the cultural nuances of Kerala. This phase of his life reflects an important chapter in the state’s indie history, where artists experimented beyond mainstream frameworks, often without the visibility or platforms available today.

However, Hebbbar’s artistic evolution did not stop with music. Transitioning into film and television, he gradually built a strong presence in Malayalam entertainment. From critically acclaimed performances in serials like Ammakili, Orma, Unniyarcha, and Sundari, to notable roles in films such as Innathe Chintha Vishayam and Manassinakkare, he carved a space for himself as a versatile and compelling actor. His work earned him multiple recognitions, including the Kerala State Television Award, Asiavision Award, and Asianet Award, highlighting his range and depth as a performer.

What makes Rajesh Hebbbar particularly fascinating in the context of Lazie Indie’s exploration is this dual identity—an artist who began in the raw, expressive world of independent music and transitioned into the structured, narrative-driven space of cinema. His journey reflects a broader story of how indie culture often feeds into mainstream success, even if its origins remain under-documented.

In this conversation, Jay Pillai speaks with Rajesh Hebbbar to trace this unique path—revisiting the days of Primitive Knights, exploring his transition into acting, and understanding how music continues to influence his creative life.

Jay Pillai: You began your creative life as a musician with the band Primitive Knights. What do you remember most vividly about those early days — the sound, the rebellion, or the sense of freedom music gave you then?

Rajesh Hebbbar: What I remember most about those days is the excitement and sheer thrill of performing. Coming from a small town like Palakkad we were all living our wildest dreams. It was sheer madness and absolute joy.

Jay Pillai: Kerala’s indie and rock scene during your college years was largely underground and undocumented. How would you describe that ecosystem — the venues, audiences, and the kind of risks young musicians were taking at the time?

Rajesh Hebbbar: We were taking a huge risk and finding the money to buy good instruments and gadgets was a real struggle. But the venues were vibrant and the audience knowledgeable and passionate. We were lucky enough to travel all over south India performing in places like Bangalore, Mangalore, Chennai, Kochi, Trivandrum etc.





Jay Pillai: Primitive Knights performed in an era without social media, streaming, or instant validation. Looking back, do you feel that limitation made the music more honest — or simply harder to survive with?

Rajesh Hebbar: Yes, we did not have social media... And it was a constant uphill struggle. But it made our success all the more sweeter and exciting because it validated our confidence in our ability as musicians and performers. It was hard to survive then. But then let's be honest it's hard to survive in the present times too.

Jay Pillai: Your journey from musician to actor feels less like a career shift and more like a slow evolution. Was there a defining moment when you realised storytelling had moved from sound to silence, from stage to screen?

Rajesh Hebbar: I have always seen my journey as a singer as a stepping stone to my ultimate aim of becoming an actor. I was very aware of my limitations as a musician and my strengths as a performer. I believe I was able to connect with the audience better because of my strength as a performer. Becoming an actor was definitely my ultimate aim and ambition. Music proved to be a catalyst propelling me towards my dreams.

Jay Pillai: Today, indie music has visibility, platforms, and algorithms — but also pressure to brand and perform constantly. As someone who's seen both eras, what excites you about the current scene, and what worries you?

Rajesh Hebbar: I find the present scenario not very different from our times. Yes the visibility and opportunities are much better. But the struggles and challenges are the same. What excites me is how technology and social media has made the music industry more democratic and there are opportunities galore. But the sad part is that the raw unbridled passion, creativity & timeless music of our times is missing because of over dependence on technology. Auto tune being a perfect example.



Jay Pillai: Many people know you primarily as a character actor now. Looking at your acting journey so far, how do you personally measure growth — by roles, recognition, or inner satisfaction?

Rajesh Hebbar: As an actor I would measure my growth, progress & satisfaction by the acceptance I have received from the audience. I have survived in one of the most competitive industries for more than two decades and still find myself a wanted and respected. "commodity." The awards and accolades add sweetness to a continuing journey. I feel blessed that my passion is my profession. I get paid to indulge my passion. What more can I ask for?

Jay Pillai: You are also a writer and poet. Do words come to you differently than music once did — or do you see writing as another rhythm, another composition altogether?

Rajesh Hebbar: Writing for me is an extension of who I am as an actor. I revel and immerse myself into it totally. It usually flows without struggle or special effort. In that aspect it is totally different from music for me. Music is something I have to really work on and fine tune constantly. I identify myself as an actor and writer who can sing a bit.



Jay Pillai: There's a growing debate today about 'art for livelihood' versus 'art for life'. From your experience, is it possible to balance both without losing the soul of one's work?

Rajesh Hebbar: If Art is to blossom and thrive unfettered it has to provide a decent livelihood. All " Art" starts of as " Art for life" and finds real fulfillment when it reaches a large audience and speaks to the world. It flourishes and grows when it provides livelihood to the artist. The romanticised concept of an impoverished but extraordinary artist somehow does not appeal to my sensibilities.

Jay Pillai: Finally, for newcomers — musicians, actors, writers — who feel overwhelmed by comparison, visibility, and speed: what kind of patience, discipline, or inner compass would you advise them to build before chasing success?

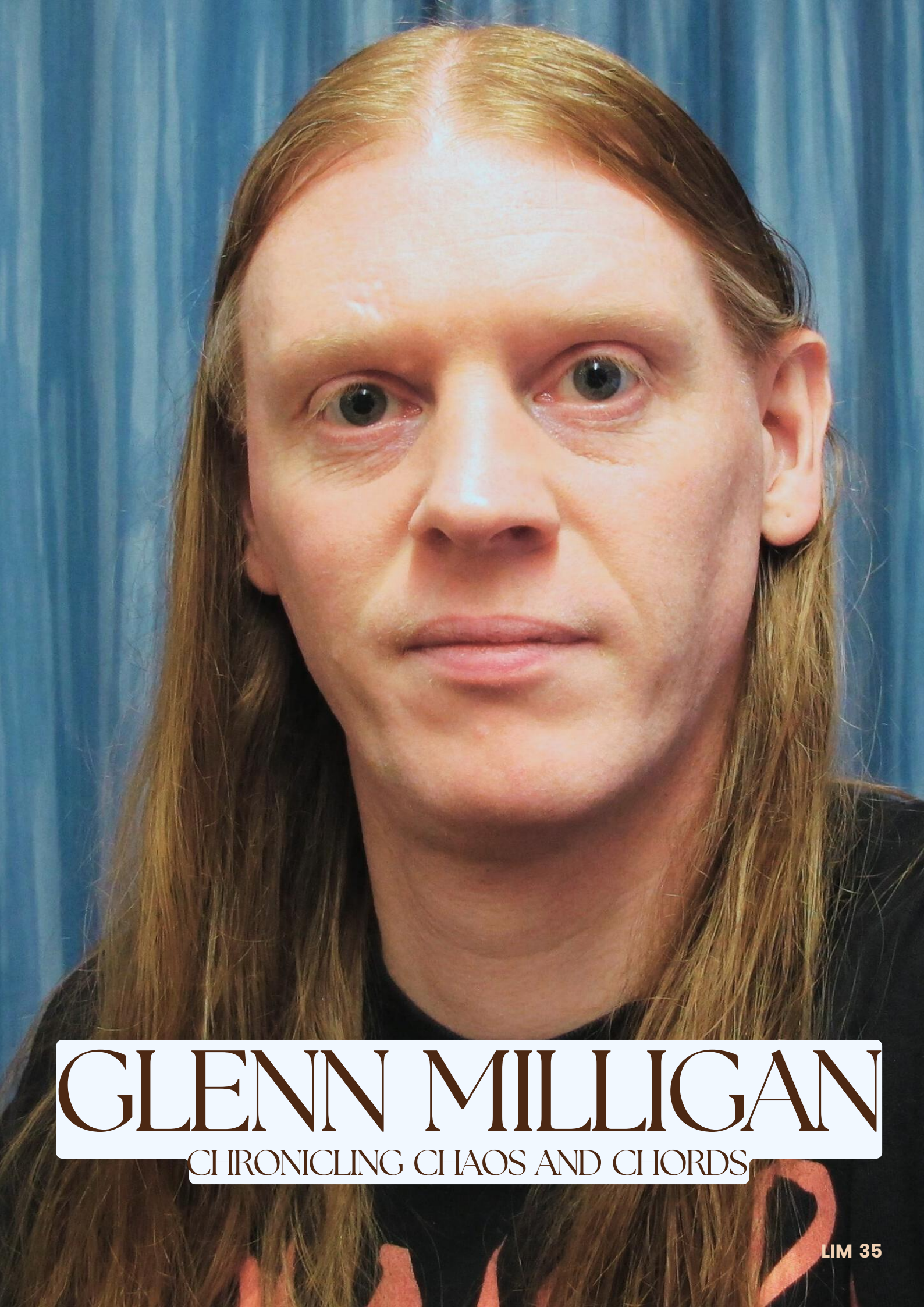
Rajesh Hebbar: If you want to make your passion your profession, be prepared for the following. Be prepared to take few hard knocks. Do not expect kindness, understanding or miracles. Have tons of patience .Just go for it. It might take time or you just might get that miraculous piece of luck early on. But either way, the rewards are many and I assure you, your life will have not one dull moment. When you finally taste success, you will realise that " The sky is not the limit".

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.



GLENN MILLIGAN

CHRONICLING CHAOS AND CHORDS

Glenn Milligan

INTERVIEWED BY SHERISE

Glenn Milligan is a Sheffield, UK based music journalist, editor, and promoter with a deep passion for rock and heavy metal and has been involved in the music business for over 25 years. As the Chief Editor of Metalliville Zine, which is well established and world recognised for 25+ years, he has built a platform dedicated to showcasing established artists alongside emerging talent from the global rock and metal scene. Known for his enthusiastic support of grassroots music, Glenn regularly conducts interviews, writes reviews, and highlights new releases that keep readers connected to the pulse of the genre.

Beyond journalism, Glenn is also active in the live music circuit as co-owner and Company Director of Red Pen Promotions, where he works to bring exciting gigs and events to venues across Sheffield and the wider UK. Red Pen Promotions holds ticketed concerts at the Network and Arundel Emporium in Sheffield such as Original Band nights, Tribute nights, as well as one or two day All-Day Festival Events. He currently runs three separate music-related projects simultaneously, including organising a Grassroots Night at the Yorkshirman Rock Bar in Sheffield, UK that takes place every Thursday and has at least three acts on each week. Glenn and his team also host a four day event during the Tramlines/Fringe Weekend at the end of July which consists of two nights and a full weekend of bands. Through both his writing and promotion work, he continues to champion the energy of live music and the creativity of bands pushing the boundaries of rock and metal.

Sherise Dsouza from Lazie Indie Magazine speaks to Glenn Milligan.

Sherise: Hi Glenn, welcome to Lazie Indie Magazine. Metalliville Zine has been a cornerstone of rock and metal journalism for over two decades. What originally inspired you to create a magazine in 2001, and what vision kept it growing through the changing eras of music media?

Glenn: Back around 1999/2000 it used to be nothing more than a paper print zine created by a buddy of mine but it simply was not good enough to withstand the test of time. It had no pictures and made from A4 sheets folded in half and stapled that were simply placed on the floor in a few music related shops in Sheffield. Myself and my brother, Paul decided to create a brand new zine as a paper issue but of course ran into the problem of costs of material so therefore needed advertising to pay for it and we could not get the advertisers because they wanted hundreds of copies to make it worthwhile for them, which we did not have the money for.

We then created Metalliville Webzine with CD Reviews, DVD Reviews, Interviews and Live Reviews as well as incorporating a links page because we all used link to each others websites (when everyone had one before all the social media platforms took over). Of course, after some time I incorporated the social media aspects when I needed to, to try and stay relevant and current without losing what was intentionally the whole goal in the first place - place Rock & Metal music on the map.

Sherise: Metalliville Zine has featured interviews with legends ranging from Whitesnake and Skindred to Uriah Heep and The Dead Daisies. Which interview changed you the most as a journalist, and why did that moment stay with you?

Glenn: There have been quite a lot of interviews over the years but the thing that really stayed was the fact of being complimented on how good I was as an Interviewer by Bill Ward of Black Sabbath. He told me that I was really good at my job and said that he had been interviewed many times in the past but this was one of the best ones he had ever had which meant a lot coming from someone of such high stature in Heavy Metal.

Sherise: You've spent years documenting heavy metal music up close from backstage conversations to the energy of UK and US venues. What evolution in the rock and metal scene has been most surprising to witness firsthand?

Glenn: That's a tough one because I have never really thought about that at all. Bands start from nothing and hopefully progress to the next level. An evolution I would say overall is witnessing how much the overall scenes can change of what is the 'in thing' and what is not.

It was strange to see a devolution to be honest, where technology has taken over at times from talent and way too many people cheating with flown-in pre-recorded vocals or instrumental sections that are part of the whole event but not visible. To me it's fake but some argue it adds to the live event. I prefer the 'plug-in-and-play and let's see what you've got to offer' than a 'load of plug-ins from a computer' since it kills the chance of real chemistry and makes it rigid -making improvisation and jamming out a song pretty much impossible.

Club or grassroots level - is where it's really at but even many of these bands make the technology more important than the songs and actual realism itself.

Sherise: Your interviewing style stands out for its depth and genuine curiosity. When approaching an iconic musician, how do you design questions that break past rehearsed press answers and trigger real conversation?

Glenn: Ooooo – that's a trade secret.... you don't want to create a million me's – hahaha. To be honest, you have to be personally interested in that artist or a fan of them for many years so the questions or curiosity actually come direct from your own personal intrigue and not simply worked out from facts and information you find from Wikipedia or anywhere else on the internet.

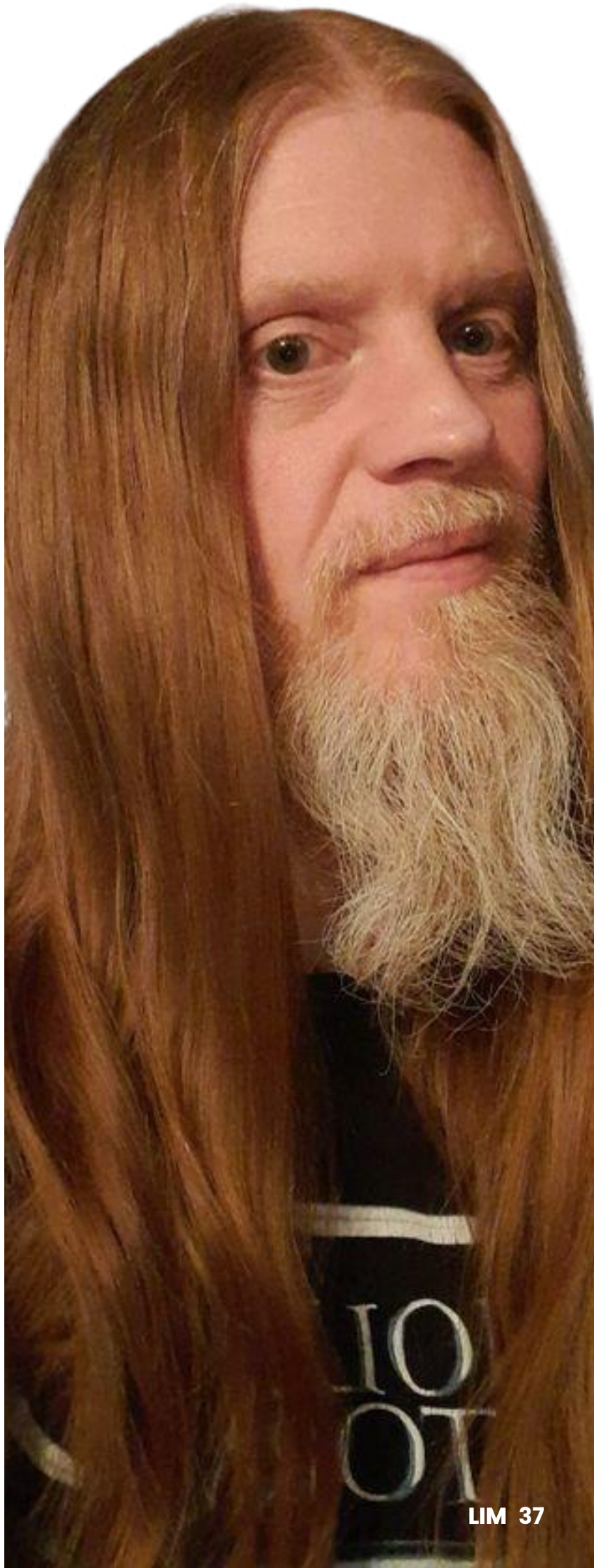
You also need to have a good knowledge about them so go to a wide variety of sources, even check what's been questioned before and do it from a totally different slant so you don't come across like one of those crass TV Interviewers who is simply following a script and have no real love or interest in that artist or their music.

You have to really absorb and understand what they are really about and get to the nitty, gritty and nucleus of it all of what makes them tick. Create a plan and notes from questions so you have your skeleton structure and work from that.

A key thing is to let the Interviewee talk and not interrupt too much if they are in flow as you never know what amazing information they could bring up. When they do, you can ask questions off the cuff, if you are quick enough – note bits down as they are talking and see where the it takes you – make it a more like conversation with your mate in the pub rather than a robotic Q&A – relax them early on and thank them too.

Also, really absorb their latest album / single and know their current material inside out so they can tell you've really done your homework on it – folks are more likely to open up to you way more. Never just rely on a press release from a PR company. Give it a scan and then ask what you want to know and not about what is simply laid out in front of you – otherwise it could be like every other interview they have done that day. They will have done hundreds over the years so the key thing is not to bore them and keep them interested in you and what you are talking about with them.

It can take years of practise unless you find you are naturally good at it.



Sherise: Running Metalliville Zine and also being a Co-Owner of Red Pen Promotions (Concert Events) means balancing interviews, reviews, event coverage, and organising events. What does your creative workflow look like today, and how has it evolved since the early 2000s?

Glenn: Back in the early 2000's I just had Metalliville Zine whereas now I run Red Pen Promotions and also run a Thursday Grassroots Band night at the Yorkshireman in Sheffield. My creative workflow today has changed an awful lot to be honest. I do not have time to do all the Metalliville Zine work as much myself with regards to doing the interviews, taking the photographs at live shows or reviewing etc. so I have a great team who take on that side, these days way more and I let them send me the Reviews, Photos and Interviews. I am more, the Editor now time-wise, piecing it all together which can be time-consuming depending on how long their reviews are or how many photographs they have sent me. It enables me to spend more time putting the Events together, not to mention promoting them. You need to have trust in a good team and be very understanding of their needs and what they are currently capable of as some folk will not have 25+ years experience like I have – it takes time and you cannot buy experience. You create and live it over years. Life experience is gold-dust.

Sherise: With streaming, AI tools for music creation, and fan-driven content reshaping music consumption, what challenges do modern rock and metal bands face that didn't exist when Metalliville Zine began?

Glenn: When comparing these days, to the early days of Metalliville, I think they can lose the actual sight of creating a good song or music and letting the technology do it for them, making their material way less organic and not from them. It restrains their own personal colour musically and can make them lazy and not learning how to create their songs from scratch. There is no substitute for a deep, meaningful song with great melody and warm, pure emotional lyrics. Bands these days can end up simply sounding like a product from a computer, with vocal and guitar sound-patches sounding like a million other bands. There is no substitute for a good song, great meaningful lyrics and melody that captures you. A song is only a good song when it can be stripped down to an acoustic level and still blow your mind – otherwise it's simply noise and not a song at all. By all means use technology when it enhances but I find too many get stuck in the trap of making the machines the creator and not them as artists/musicians/performers. It does my head in when bands call them singles when all it is, is a 1 song, virtual reality download – a single has a sleeve and a side b -I am old-school. Too many get caught up in making streaming more important than physical product, therefore there is less money coming back in to fund the band – too many are giving their work away online for pittance or nothing – it's the nature of the beast. They need to get their music out there but they need to create themselves some kind of income too.

Sherise: You've recorded interviews with everyone from rising local bands to award-winning icons. Which under-the-radar artist left the strongest impression on you and deserves more global spotlight?

Glenn: Again it's something I have never really thought about. When you have interviewed so many over the years you forget. 'American Dog' should have been way bigger than they got – the sound of like 'Southern Rock meets Motorhead' from the South of the USA or the All-Girl Band, Broadzilla from Detroit. It makes you wonder why they never made it massive – maybe it was down to money – you have to buy-on to the big shows or tours or 'pay-to play' in some venues. Then they may have fallen out, members had to relocate or the scene totally changed without them having any personal control of it. These days it's easier to keep in the eye of the beholder due to so much reliance on Social Media which wasn't about as much back then – it was way more primitive with Myspace or having to go out your way to discover artists – we did have more musical related programmes or TV in the UK back in the day though like The Tube, The Old Grey Whistle Test and MTV actually aired bands. Even 'Top Of The Pops' or Saturday morning kids tv shows with various bands on.

Sherise: Your Instagram (@milliganglenn) regularly showcases the concerts you attend and you promote events from club gigs to large metal festivals. What drives your instinct for deciding the shows to organise next and the concepts and bands to promote?

Glenn: I basically have a personal love and interest in live music and bands in general. You can call it cliché but I am simply trying to keep the live scene alive as much as I can which is hard work, believe me. I have the drive to give well-deserving bands a stage to play on in venues that also cares about Grassroot level bands or having nights on for it in general despite how much money they or may not make via the bar takings or ticket sales. The show must go on and always does. Sometimes it comes down to bands asking if they can play or you discovering them online or seeing them at another show local or otherwise. I then try and work a bill around that first confirmed band that will gel and flow well.



With regard to concepts, it can work in two ways - you try and put an event on that is not currently happening in your area that you think will work or go with a genre themed night that seems to work well in the area. We all want to put on nights that we personally like musically but that narrows down your audience unless you have a few hundred folk with the same mindset and love for that particular style of music – if you do, it's a win-win but you have to ensure to try and please the audience 1st as they are the ones making the show happen on the night. Sometimes I get it right and other times it can bomb when you think it would do well. It's all a musical gamble. I have to do the research somewhat and keep the ears and eyes to the ground in-case something is bubbling that you think will do well and deserves recognition. You also have to grab the eye of the public with your posters and make them stand out to all the others online if you can – uniqueness is a key thing – I always have the bands create the posters for the night for Grass Roots Thursday / Battle For The Grand so they are always different.

The posters for 'Mountains Of Metal' are the same design but our Poster Man, Jake McCabe of the band Dire Thorns changes the colour. He does amazing Posters for our Ticketed events that take place at Network or 'Arundel Emporium' in Sheffield.

Sherise: Many rock journalists talk about the “unwritten code” of respecting both artist vulnerability and fan expectations. What personal philosophy guides the way you tell an artist's story?

Glenn: Basically keep it about that artist in the artist stance – keep them on the pedestal, even if they are not that person 24/7 – many of us have day jobs, but we aren't talking about the day job in the interview as it's irrelevant and can kill the impact of that artist unless they bring up their day job in the interview. I have always taken out anything on their request if they happened to get carried away in the interview and said stuff that the fans don't need to know – various personal details etc. or moaning about a particular member of their band or another band etc.

Sherise: You've covered countless live gigs from Manchester to Sheffield and across the UK rock circuit. What's the most unforgettable live show you've ever reviewed and what made it special to you as both a fan and a critic?

Glenn: After 25+ years, it's simply impossible to just come up with one. One that instantly comes to mind was David Gilmour at Hollywood Bowl because he had David Crosby on stage with him of Crosby Stills & Nash – a fav. band of mine, who passed away in the last two or three years. Mollie Marriott in Sheffield was special because she is the daughter of one of my favourite singers, Steve Marriott (The Small Faces/Humble Pie).

Being in the photopit at the Royal Albert Hall in London, getting photographs of Peter Frampton is special because I had wanted to see him for years and it was billed as his last ever UK show which made it even more special.

One more that instantly comes to mind was Carl Palmer's Legacy (the drummer from Emerson, Lake & Palmer) because he was simply mesmerising and little wonder I was on a high for a long time after.

All these reviews (as we say in the biz) basically wrote themselves since some can be like pulling teeth trying to think of something really stand-out to write as some can be rather anti-climax, unfulfilling and going through the motions and a dash-for-the-cash.

Sherise: New generations often discover rock and metal through nostalgia, reissues, or TikTok virality. As someone who has documented this genre for decades, how do you feel about the future of rock journalism?

Glenn: Hmmmm... Interesting question that. I had 6 years media experience and training from National Diploma to Bachelor Of Arts Level before I even wrote or took a photo for Metalliville Zine with including interview skills from some professionals in the business at the time who had the old school way of working from scratch.

I also learned the art of how to do a decent interview by studying watching/listening to Interviewers like Michael Aspel, Michael Parkinson, Russell Harty, Roger Scott, Bob Harris, John Peel, Terry Wogan or Richard Skinner.

The point I am getting at by bringing them up is that many these days don't get to see that in the present and I feel they may learn how not to do an interview by following the styles of these TV hacks who ridicule the Interviewees and make themselves more important.

I think they need to have a good grounding these days and not come across as unprofessional or embarrassing in an interview situation. I think some of this TikTok stuff is kinda crap and just some guy sticking a mobile phone into someone's face which makes me cringe at times and come across unprepared and unprofessional. There is no substitute for good research & manners, clarity and good etiquette. All interviewers must treat interviewees as they would like to be treated, themselves. Also, you need to have a real deal magazine you are working for or develop a reputable name for yourself; that takes time.



MOUNTAINS OF METAL 2026

MASTER OF PULVERISE

THE LAST BASTION

BRIGHT BLACK

DR SAVAGE Echoes of Obsidian

FAMILY OF ADDICTION

ARUNDEL EMPORIUM

Saturday 4th July
Sheffield
Arundel Emporium
14 Matilda St
3pm - 11pm
10 ADV / 17.50 OTD

THE YORKSHIREMAN

24 JULY 2025

FREE ENTRY 8PM

THE ABANDONERS

F3INT

OPERATION ALAN

10 ARUNDEL GATE, SHEFFIELD S1 2PP

GRASSROOTS PRESENTS....

The West Riding Of Yorkshire
RILLINGTON PLACE.

SCULPTURES

MAY DAYS IN BARCELONA

Doors 8pm
Free Entry

18th September 2025
@Yorkshireman,
10 Arundel Gate, Sheffield City Centre, S1 2PP

BATTLE FOR THE GRAND

5TH MARCH '26
8PM DOORS
FREE ENTRY

THE YORKSHIREMAN
10 ARUNDEL GATE
SHEFFIELD CITY CENTRE
SHEFFIELD S1 2PP

BURNING CIRCUS

THEM SCREAMING TEETH

MOOD VACUUM

Also respect Artists and the PR Companies that you are involved with. They can either make or break you. The higher up you go, the smaller the circle is.

A major concern is that some folk think they are a Rock journalists and all they have is a mobile phone, an ego and a desperation to be seen as opposed to create product actually worth seeing. Another concern is the actual concentration time of a viewer. The younger end of the spectrum for some bizarre reason seem to have a short attention span than us 50+ old schoolers who enjoy watching a 30+ minute interview and not just 10 seconds on TikTok. Full length Interviews it seems do not seem to be getting the attention and views they deserve whereas these 10-15 second shorts get thousands of views.

These days new Journalists literally have to engage a viewer for seconds whereas back in the early 2000's, people were up for reading - yes, reading a full 1 hour plus Interview online, whereas now they would prefer listening in for a few interviews or watch a few seconds of the interview on social media platforms. You have to be up with the Zoom technology these days or you can be ignored – plus post at the right time and use the correct tags either as words or actually account tagging. It's a totally different animal these days – easier to access but there are way more at it. The competition is tougher but does everyone have the same passion for it on a long term basis like I did back in the day and still love doing it? Time will tell if many are still here in 2050, who are new to being a Rock Journalist.

Sherise: What is the biggest misconception do people have about music journalists, especially those who focus on rock and metal?

Glenn: They think there is big money to be made in it. Only the top tier make the money – those who are established in the big print well-established magazines. The majority of us are doing it for the love of it which soon separates the wheat from the chaff, after a short time. We give up a lot of our spare time to do something that we love for little pay if any. Setting yourself up for the reviewer guest list or Interview is one thing but there is a lot of long, hard work to do after you have captured it all regarding creating your article for online or print purposes and then there is the promotion of it on top of that.

It's not about looking cool at the gig to everyone, it's about doing your job to the best of your ability even when the conditions are not always great. You are not there backstage all the time - it's not the heyday of the 80's and true to say that backstage or green room is often a bunch of guys having a chat, getting ready for the show or sitting with a laptop catching up on things. Gone are those crazy days of constant groupies, copious amounts of alcohol and drugs etc. – the times you get folk, usually females wanting to know you to get backstage is unreal at times!

These days, there is no get-rich-quick-scheme as a journalist unless you can really crack the algorithms and monetise on a large scale. To be honest it's a lot of hard work and then some more.

Sherise: Finally, what would you like to say to your readers who have followed your work from its early print-style days to its global digital presence today?

Glenn: I would like to thank every one of you for sticking with me all these years. Believe me, years go quicker than you think. If you like what we do as a team, be sure to contact us and come and say 'Hi', in-person, etc.

Most importantly, I would say, do not ignore that grassroots bands in the pubs, bars and smaller clubs and simply attend the bigger shows because that basically is a major nail in the coffin for every single scene.

Support the bands and venues on all levels because everyone starts somewhere – The Rolling Stones, U2 or Bruce Springsteen etc. all started in the corner of a pub or bar and now sell out Stadiums.

Share and view our work when you see it directly from us as opposed to only when the artist shares it. We are only as popular around the world as you make us. The more help you give us, the bands, the venues and the industry overall, the more we can all, as a whole keep things going, for more generations to come.

ABOUT COLUMNIST

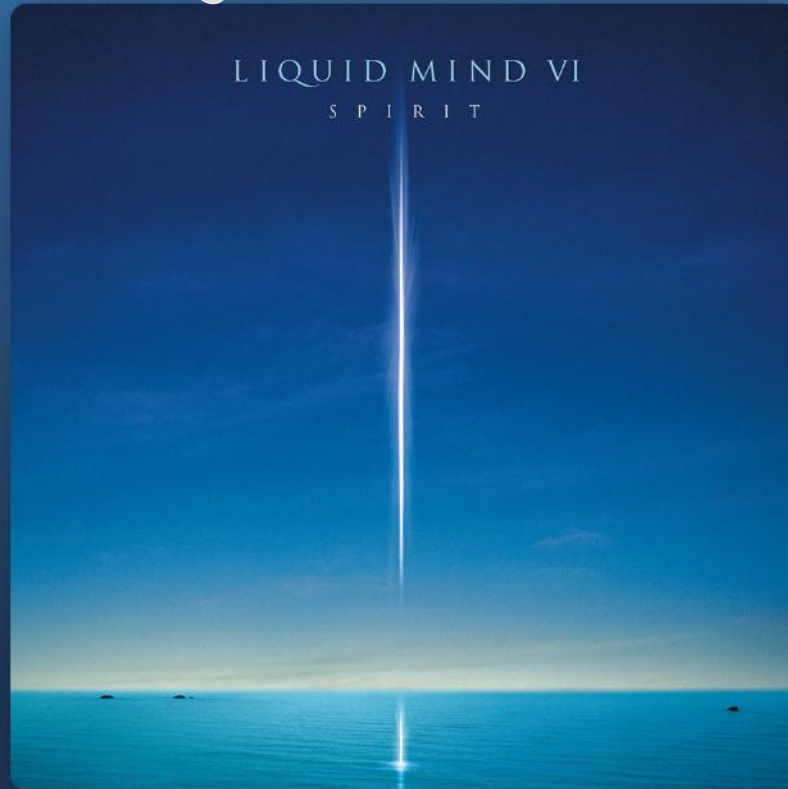
SHERISE



'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.

LISTEN TO

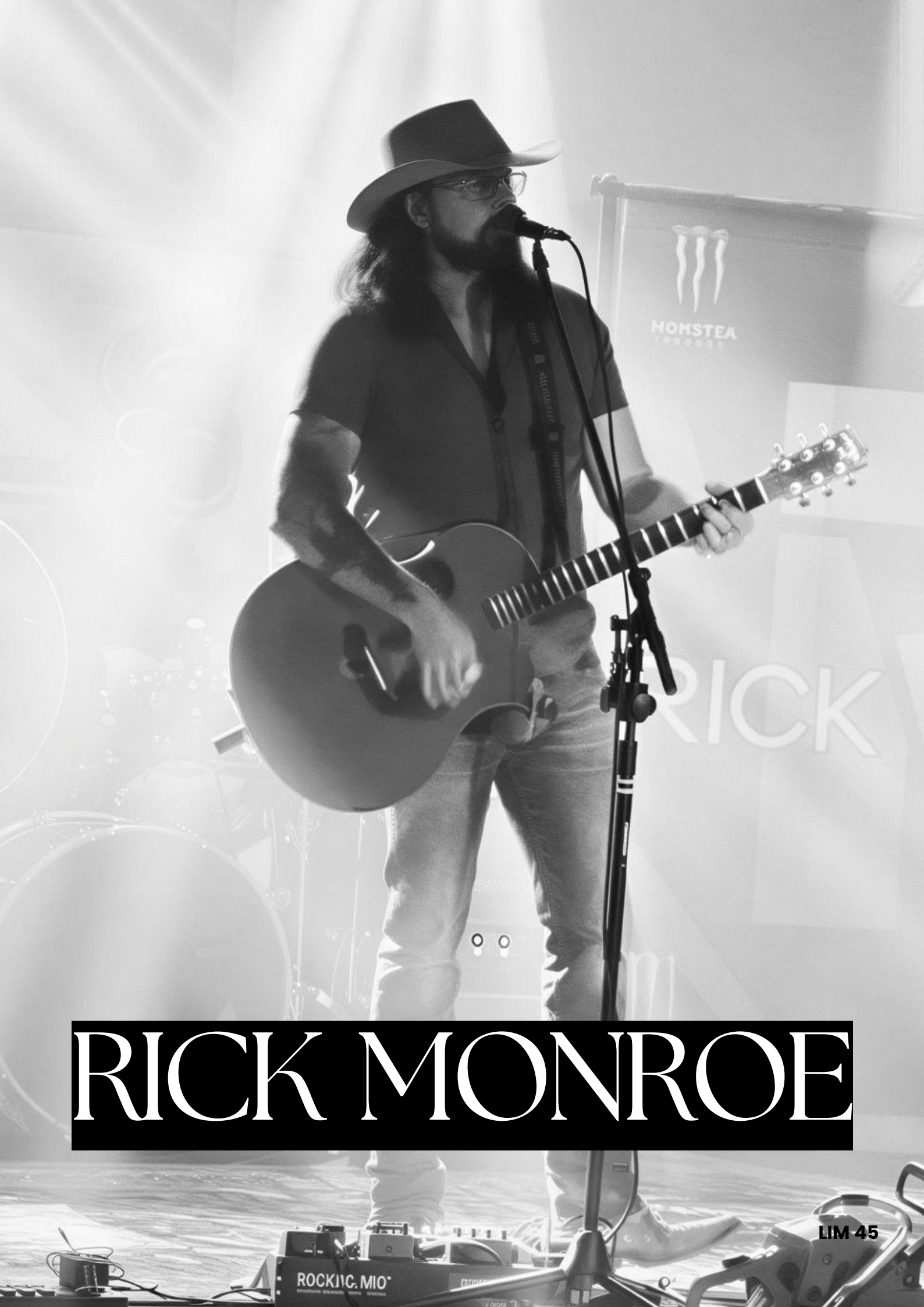
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S L E E P

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MONSTER
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RICK MONROE

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RICK MONROE

Loud Roads, Real Grit, and the Sound of Modern Country Rock

Presented by Galaxy FM NZL

Rick Monroe stands at the crossroads of country storytelling and southern rock intensity, carving out a sound that refuses to sit quietly within genre boundaries. As the driving force behind Rick Monroe and the Hitmen, he has built a reputation not just as a recording artist, but as a relentless live performer—one who thrives on the raw energy of the stage and the connection with audiences across borders.

Often described as the “AC/DC of Country/Rock music,” Monroe’s sound is unapologetically bold—fueled by powerful guitar riffs, pounding rhythms, and an authenticity that echoes through every performance. His music carries the spirit of southern rock while embracing the narrative depth of country, creating a blend that feels both timeless and immediate. It’s not just about sound—it’s about attitude, presence, and a commitment to keeping live music loud, real, and unfiltered.

What makes Rick Monroe’s journey particularly compelling is the path that led him here. Beginning as a drummer at just nine years old, he developed a deep understanding of rhythm and structure before transitioning into songwriting and vocals. That foundation still shapes his music today—his songs don’t just tell stories, they move with a pulse that feels instinctive and alive.

Having lived across diverse locations including Florida, England, Kansas, North Carolina, California, and now Nashville, Monroe’s musical identity is shaped by a wide spectrum of influences. This exposure has allowed him to create a sound that is not confined by geography, but instead built on a global understanding of music’s emotional power. His move to Nashville in 2007 marked a defining chapter, placing him in the heart of country music while allowing him to sharpen his distinctive fusion of rock and country.

Over the years, Monroe and his band have built a strong touring presence, earning recognition not only for their recordings but for their electrifying live shows. Songs like “Crazy Not To” reaching the Top-40 charts marked important milestones, while projects like *Live from the Asylum* and the upcoming *Southern Tea Bags* LP signal an artist who continues to evolve without losing his edge.

Now, as his music reaches new audiences across the world—including a growing fanbase in India—Rick Monroe represents something increasingly rare: an artist rooted in authenticity, driven by passion, and unafraid to stay loud in a world that often asks musicians to play it safe.

In this exclusive conversation for *Lazie Indie Magazine*, Barbara and Grant of Galaxy FM NZL spoke to Rick Monroe on behalf of LIM, bringing insights from across continents into his journey, influences, and what lies ahead.

Barbara: The musical journey began with drums at the age of nine before moving into singing and songwriting. What sparked that shift?

Rick Monroe: I started out behind the drum kit when I was about nine years old, and it gave me a strong sense of rhythm and the backbone of how songs work. Over time I found myself paying more attention to melodies and lyrics. I’d sit with a guitar and start writing ideas that felt personal. Singing and songwriting became a natural extension of that curiosity. I still think like a drummer when I write, which helps keep the groove strong.

Grant: Growing up in places as different as Clearwater and England must have exposed you to many cultures. How did those experiences shape your musical perspective?

Rick Monroe: Growing up between Clearwater, Florida, England, Kansas, North Carolina, California and now Nashville, TN gave me a pretty wide musical lens. By moving so much I’ve been blessed to have been able experience so many different genres of music first hands. It taught me that great music crosses borders, and it encouraged me to blend influences instead of staying inside one lane.



Barbara: Moving to Nashville in 2007 placed you in the heart of country music. How did that move influence your career?

Rick Monroe: Moving to Nashville was a big turning point. Being surrounded by incredible songwriters and musicians pushed me to grow quickly as an artist. The city has a creative energy where collaboration happens naturally, and that helped me refine my songwriting and performance style. Nashville also opened doors to touring, recording, and connecting with people in the industry who understood the blend of country and rock I wanted to bring to my music.

Grant: Your take on "Midnight Rider" brought a fresh edge to a classic. What drew you to that song?

Rick Monroe: "Midnight Rider" has always been one of those songs that sticks with you. The groove, the message of independence, and that timeless southern rock feel really spoke to me. I grew up listening to music from The Allman Brothers Band, so covering it felt natural. We wanted to honor the spirit of the original while giving it a slightly more modern country-rock energy that fits what we do live.

Barbara: "Crazy Not To" breaking into the Top-40 radio charts was a big milestone. What memories stand out from that time?

Rick Monroe: "Crazy Not To" was one of our first songs to climb into the Top-40 Country charts, it was incredibly exciting. I remember hearing it on the radio while driving and realizing people across the country were connecting with the song. For any artist, that's a special moment. It also meant a lot for the band and everyone who worked on the track. Those moments remind you why you spend so many hours writing, recording and touring.

Grant: Over the years, your music has blended country, rock, and blues influences. How would you describe the Rick Monroe sound today?

Rick Monroe: The Rick Monroe and the Hitmen sound today is really a blend of country storytelling with the hard hitting energy of rock and the soul of southern blues with a little classic rock thrown in good measure. I've always loved music that feels authentic and a little gritty, so we try to keep that live-band feel in the recordings. It's music that works just as well on a big stage as it does through the speakers. At the core it's about strong songs, big hooks and honest performances.

Barbara: Our readers would love to know what comes next. Are there any new songs, recordings, or projects currently in the works?

Rick Monroe: There's always something new happening in the studio. We've been working on fresh material that continues to push that rock-country direction to the edge while exploring some new textures and songwriting ideas. We're recording songs that we've been testing live with audiences, which is always a great way to shape them. The goal is to keep releasing music that feels true to who we are while giving fans something new to connect with. We have a live EP called "Live from the Asylum" coming out late spring with the full "Southern Tea Bags" LP coming out late Summer. We have already been dropping tracks from the LP like "45," "Bad Thing" and "Our Love."

Grant: We understand that an upcoming tour in India is being planned. What excites you most about bringing your music to Indian audiences?

Rick Monroe: A few years back I started noticing we were getting some interesting comments and accelerated views on our YouTube Lyric Video for "This Side Of You." The song was release as a single in 2017 and had minor success, Musicrow top 40 and Billboard Indicator top 50. Through a little investigation we figured out the song was pre-loaded on several new models of Vivo Phones, it's estimated to be on 40-45 million phones. Vivo is a subsidiary of BBK electronics, which is the 2nd largest phone manufacturer in the world. They never licensed the song and we can't figure out how they got the song in the first place but we have gained a great new fanbase all over Southeast Asia and India is our first stop. The idea of bringing our music to India is really exciting. One of the best parts of being a musician is seeing how songs connect with people in different parts of the world.



Even if cultures are different, the emotions in music are universal. I'm looking forward to experiencing the audiences, the energy, and sharing that country-rock sound with listeners who may be hearing it live for the first time.

Barbara: Many musicians and music lovers read Lazie Indie Magazine around the world. What advice would you like to share with our readers who are pursuing their own musical journeys?

Rick Monroe: Play music because you love it, period! Not just to be famous but because it is like breathing air. Stay true to your sound and keep putting in the work. Music careers rarely happen overnight, and the journey is just as important as the destination. Write as much as you can, perform whenever possible, and learn from every experience. Surround yourself with people who believe in what you're doing. Most importantly, enjoy the process—because the love of music is what keeps everything moving forward.



ABOUT COLUMNIST

GALAXY FM



Around the Galaxy is a column contributed by Galaxy FM 107, New Zealand, introducing artists from New Zealand and from around the world. Galaxy FM is one of the top radio stations in New Zealand and is rapidly expanding its listener base worldwide. The authors of the column, Barbara Harkins and DJ Grant, are well-known radio hosts on Galaxy FM, where they present the popular Breakfast Show. Lazie Indie Magazine thanks the Galaxy FM team for their continued support.

Website: www.galaxyfm.co.nz



ANTHARIKSH

“WHERE SOUND FINDS FREEDOM”

ANTHARIKSH

“WHERE SOUND FINDS FREEDOM”

At the intersection of heritage and horizon, where classical depth meets contemporary fire, Antariksh stands as one of the many powerful voices shaping the sound of India’s independent music movement. Bold, expansive, and emotionally charged, their music reflects a generation that refuses to be boxed in—bridging East and West, past and future, rebellion and tradition.

Founded and led by Varun Rajput—composer, producer, guitarist, and vocalist—Antariksh began in 2012 as a creative exploration. Over time, it has evolved into a genre-defying force, blending the raw intensity of rock with the intricate soul of Hindustani and Carnatic music, layered seamlessly with modern pop melodies and electronic textures. Their sound doesn’t just experiment—it connects, inviting listeners into a space that feels both deeply personal and universally resonant.

With over 1,200 live performances across India and internationally—including the USA, Mauritius, Madagascar, Vietnam, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Nepal—Antariksh has built a reputation for electrifying stage presence and immersive storytelling. Their collaboration with global guitar icon Marty Friedman on the award-winning track “Quest” reflects their ability to engage with global influences while staying rooted in their identity.

From their debut album Khoj to tracks like Kaahe Re, Kaisi Ye Jeet?, Jee Le Zara, and Ye Jhootha Samaa, the band has consistently pushed creative boundaries. Their second album, Quest, further cements their evolution—combining introspective themes with expansive sonic landscapes that challenge and inspire listeners alike.

Antariksh’s journey is not an isolated one—it is part of a larger wave of independent artists redefining what Indian music can be. Platforms that nurture and elevate such talent play a crucial role in this movement. Lazie Indie Magazine’s new partner columnist, Songdew, has been instrumental in this space, discovering and supporting a diverse community of artists across genres and geographies.

Antariksh is proud to be one among many successful artists emerging from the Songdew ecosystem—an artist shortlisted from a vast pool of applicants, reflecting both their unique voice and the platform’s commitment to quality and diversity. We are truly glad and thankful for Songdew’s continued efforts to support independent musicians in India and beyond, helping them reach wider audiences and build sustainable creative journeys.

At its core, Antariksh represents more than just music—it represents momentum. A movement of artists, audiences, and enablers coming together to reshape the independent music landscape. And as they continue to evolve, with new music and ambitious concepts on the horizon, Antariksh remains a vital thread in this ever-growing tapestry of sound.

Ayan from Songdew spoke to Varun of Anthariksh

Ayan: Your first album, Khoj, came out back in 2013 and was all about the internal search for identity. After a decade of touring and evolving, how does that original "search" compare to the themes you're exploring in your new music?

Varun: Honestly, the themes I write about today are still rooted in a similar space beginning with a lot of reflection and introspection. ‘Khoj’ was about the search for identity. With our upcoming concept album Rehghuzar, I feel we’ve moved a step further. It explores what happens once you begin that journey. It’s about the emotional landscape of pursuing passion, walking the road less travelled—the highs, the doubts, the chaos. I feel that it’s a space most artists, musicians, and entrepreneurs or anyone who’s taken the road less travelled will relate to.



Ayan: You've performed at some pretty massive events lately, like India Bike Week in Panchgani. Does playing for a high-energy "biker" crowd change the way you approach your setlist compared to a more standard concert?

Varun: I feel our music has always had a lot of synergy with the biking festivals & community given that we write a lot of edgy music in the rock/metal space. As far as the setlist goes, the enthusiasm of the biking community always makes us throw one or two cool classic rock/metal covers by let's say a Deep Purple or an Iron Maiden

Ayan: Your track "Naaqis" features some incredible collaborations with Jakub Zytecki and Momin Khan. How do you go about balancing and combining such different elements—like the Sarangi and prog-rock guitar—without making the song feel cluttered?

Varun: Well, the simple idea is to only go in for a collaboration when the song arrangement and composition calls for it. For Naaqis, I was very sure that I wanted an Indian legato instrument in the section before the second verse and for some reason when I narrowed it down, Sarangi just felt right. I went ahead and reached out to one of the finest Sarangi players in the country to grace that part. As for the guitar solo by Jakub, I was again pretty sure that I wanted someone who had a very unique playing style to play a solo in that section. When it comes to guitar players, I tend to reach out to some of the players who I admire. And thankfully, Jakub agreed to be a part of it. To answer your question about not making the song cluttered - the broad idea is to always go in for the right collaborators in the right song sections.

Ayan: Antariksh has always had great acts at college fests. What is it about that specific student energy that keeps you guys coming back, and does that vibe ever bleed into your songwriting?

Varun: I feel college students in general are not only full of energy and enthusiasm but also more open minded to new music than let's say a 30-35 year old, who's already developed his/her musical taste and does not have as much time to explore more. Also, rock music thrives on exchange of energy, and I guess college festivals are one of the purest environments for that. The only other thing that might beat that is maybe a large-scale music festival.

Ayan: "Udaan" feels like a very optimistic, "feel-good" track. Was that sound a direct result of the energy you felt coming off your recent US tour?

Varun: As I mentioned, many of our recent releases are part of an upcoming concept album, 'Rehghuzar' where each song captures a different emotional phase of pursuing one's passion. "Udaan" is the very beginning of that journey and as with any beginning, it's filled with excitement, optimism, and a sense of possibility. I've tried to reflect that feeling both lyrically and musically through the song.

Ayan: Early on, the band went through several changes in the lineup, which eventually led to you taking over as the lead vocalist. Looking back, how do you think those early transitions shaped the band's eventual "signature" sound?

Varun: I believe that a signature sound usually is a result of countless, repetitive minor decisions across songwriting, composition, recording and mixing processes. During the writing for 'Khoj' those decisions were shaped by both me and my dear friend, Mridul Ganesh (Former singer of Antariksh). We had played together for years before that, so our musical instincts and tastes were very aligned, which helped define the band's early sound. When Mridul left for the US in 2014, I naturally stepped into a larger creative and production role for Antariksh. Despite the lineup changes, I feel having a very clear vision throughout the songwriting & production process, has helped maintain a signature sound and sonic identity, which is something I'm very proud of. Antariksh is a band that proves you don't have to follow a specific "indie" formula to be successful. By sticking to their roots while experimenting with new sounds, they've managed to build a loyal tribe of listeners across the world. As they move toward the release of Rehghuzar, it's clear that their journey is far from over—they're just getting started on a new chapter.



Ayan: “Sabki Kahani” has a more satirical, social-commentary edge to it. What was happening around you that made you want to write something about the “chaos and comedy” of modern times?

Varun: Again, similar to ‘Udaan’, ‘Sabki Kahani’ is also a part of the upcoming concept album, ‘Rehguzar’. The song represents a phase in the journey, where after tasting a bit of success, the character develops an inflated sense of ego and begins giving unsolicited gyaan to people around him. So, I’ve tried to represent that theme through some humor & satire in the lyrics. I feel it works as part of the larger story, but also stands on its own as a fun, slightly tongue-in-cheek take on modern behavior for people who’re not necessarily listening to it as a part of the album.

Ayan: You’ve been featured on both seasons of Salim-Sulaiman’s SoundChk. What was the biggest takeaway from working with veteran composers like them when it comes to the technical side of production?



Varun: Oh! It was an incredible experience. They have an absolutely amazing, organized and professional team which made the entire experience a very memorable one. I don't shy away from saying that, generally it's hard to find people in the music industry who are professional and ethical - but when I worked with the team at Merchant Records, it was a breeze and a super fun experience, which also is probably reflective of why people like Salim & Sulaiman are successful and well respected.

Ayan: Between the intense, long hours in the studio and the constant travel for live shows, where do you feel most "at home" as an artist?

Varun: I think I find home in a good balance of the two. The studio gives me space to learn, create & introspect, while the concerts give me that immediate connection & energy. I really like it when I'm able to move between both worlds.

Ayan: Your upcoming album "Rehgzar" is described as a concept piece. What can fans expect from the overall "story" of this album, and how does it represent where Antariksh is headed next?

Varun: Well, at its core, 'Rehgzar' is a reflection of persistence, patience, and resilience. It explores the highs and lows of pursuing one's passion. Through trials & tribulations, from euphoric moments of creation to crushing self-doubt and insecurity, the album celebrates the courage it takes to stay authentic and keep walking the path, no matter the obstacles. It's a story that a lot of artists, musicians, and entrepreneurs will connect with but at the same time, it's also deeply personal. I guess in many ways, it mirrors my own journey with Antariksh. I can't wait to put it out this summer and see what people think of it .



**COLUMN
PROVIDED BY**

SONGDEW

Song Dew is India's leading platform that functions as a music business administrator for independent artists. It works with over 90,000 musicians across languages and genres, helping them create, distribute, promote, and monetise their music, while connecting them with opportunities across live events, media, and brand collaborations.

Interview



AMAN MAHAJAN

Aman Mahajan

Harikrishnan interviews Aman Mahajan

Aman Mahajan is an Indian pianist and composer known for his solo and collaborative work across diverse musical forms. A voyager through musical realms, he approaches improvisation as a medium for interaction, expression and exchange. His music draws inspiration from personal experience, philosophy, and a rich tapestry of traditional and contemporary influences. Over the past two decades, he has collaborated widely across the creative spectrum, driven by a restless search for musical and stylistic exploration. His personal music project REFUGE pays homage to inward journeys, exploring the ever-evolving idea of home through compositions that balance careful craft and free improvisation. Harikrishnan of Lazie Indie Magazine caught up with Aman recently ...

Hari: Can you introduce yourself, your most frequent collaborators and your current projects for our readers?

Aman Mahajan: I'm Aman Mahajan, a multilingual pianist based in Bangalore. REFUGE is my personal project and lab, a sort of umbilical cord that connects me to my musical home. Outside of this, I regularly collaborate with quite a few people – Bangalore-based jazz vocalist Radha Thomas, Berlin-based guitarist Nishad Pandey in Tinctures, and cross-cultural Bangalore trio Mystik Vibes, featuring Amith Nadig (Carnatic flute) and Muthu Kumar (tabla, hybrid percussion). I am also part of Auroville-based groups Sage For The Ages (led by Kirtana Krishna) and TRAK (led by Dhani Muniz). Contemporary/carnatic violinist Apoorva Krishna is another one of my favourite and frequent collaborators.

Hari: What would be an ideal retrospective for your career till now? What are the highlights both the positive and the setbacks, if you don't mind?

Aman Mahajan: I started out with classical piano at an early age, with music teachers in Bombay and Hyderabad. I remember learning left and right through bass and treble clef! Meanwhile at home, my parents and I were listening to an assortment of music. I remember having a compilation tape called Musical Journey that would be played for me to fall asleep at night. It contained music from all around the world. I was fortunate to have a lot of exposure through live concerts in Hyderabad, and music we listened to at home and in the car. Over time, I grew interested in improvisation, including through working with mistakes I made in classical pieces. I played a little bit of the guitar and drums, and learning these instruments challenged me to break music down in different ways. I took to exploring scales with a drone. Dennis Powell, my music teacher at school, was very influential in encouraging me to explore jazz and improvised music. My parents have always encouraged me to do music – my mother was the one who first introduced me to piano lessons, and my father suggested I go to Berklee. Arjun Chandran, a friend of many years now, involved me Hyderabad's only jazz band at the time – The Charminar Jazz Collective. I remember us trying in so many ways to learn this music that was so alien to the place we were in. All of this eventually led me to study at The Berklee College of Music (Boston), where I was exposed to so much music of all kinds. Boston's rich musical landscape exposed me to everything from Balinese gamelan music to modern jazz. I majored in music synthesis, as it felt like the most experimental and creative place to be in college, while I used electives to study jazz harmony and world music rhythms, things that reflect strongly in my music now. At the time, I was definitely more on the academic side of things, trying to learn but feeling unable to communicate freely through the instrument. Since my return to India and move to Bangalore after my studies in Boston, I've had the fortune to work with music in so many forms — crossovers with Indian classical and folk music, Tamil and Hindi pop music, singer-songwriters, straight-ahead and contemporary jazz, numerous duo formats, concept albums, RnB and neo-soul, and freely improvised music. These opportunities have really helped me develop the ability to speak through the instrument with immediacy in diverse musical situations, something I was always trying to develop. I believe in improvisational music as a powerful connecting force. Through music, one can potentially communicate and interact at a very high resolution, with other musicians and listeners, with emotion, intelligence and a sense of humour.

JAZZ INDIA CIRCUIT



Hari: This is a concept that keeps cropping up whenever I hear or read about you - what is home for you?

Aman Mahajan: Home in music is somewhere I can feel comfortable and free to be expressive. In practice, collaboration and teaching, I try to explore and develop direct connections with aspects of music, so one can embody a musical idea and use it like language. A long-term goal is to be able to communicate and interact with anyone through music.

Hari: How would you differentiate your various projects both philosophically and musically?

Aman Mahajan: When I do sit at the piano and compose, it's usually for my own project, Refuge. The collaborations usually have their own timeframes and are more situation-oriented and planned. It's sometimes easier to write and finish pieces in that way.

For example when I write with Nishad or Radha, it would be us together in the same room. With Mystik Vibes, we may decide to each bring in a new idea to a rehearsal and develop it together. So new ideas that happen to come up during personal practice or exploration are usually stored and perhaps developed into my own pieces over the years. It's a long process!

Projects led by others (Intuition, Sage For The Ages, TRAK) have the compositions coming in from the bandleader. These are spaces I get to develop accompaniment/arrangement ideas.

Hari: Being an improvisational musician... for someone with as many years of experience as you do, and as big a vocabulary as you do up your sleeves (quite literally I imagine) what does improvisation mean for you?

Aman Mahajan: Sometimes the word "improvisation" feels quite lofty. When we speak, or do almost anything in our daily lives, that's improvising too! I see improvisation in music as something quite natural — speaking through an instrument, in a language that's broad and interactive.

Of course, there's no end to vocabulary and learning. That's the joy and hard work associated with a life in music, especially when not restricted to a particular 'genre'.

I think the challenge is to retain a sensitivity of expression, and to remain open and communicative with one's musical vocabulary. Not being repetitive, or doing something just because you've practised it.

Hari: I have attended your workshops in music and one thing that I brought home with me is being okay with the notion of dissonance? Can you give us a little bit about your workshops and what your intentions are behind them?

Aman Mahajan: Through the workshops, we try to impart a sense of play and the fun of musical interactions. I also find it important to highlight the development of musical senses rather than theory — for example a sense of rhythm, melody, or dynamics. I believe that only through embodying these fundamental aspects of music, one feels truly able to speak through music.

I've worked on many approaches for these purposes, and teaching is constant experimentation.

Hari: What was the most uncomfortable territory in music that you have explored in your career? Who was it with (in the sense that you'd require an exceptionally strong bond to navigate uncharted territories or uncomfortable domains)?

Aman Mahajan: Playing with musicians much better or more advanced than you in some way — that can really be the most uncomfortable, and also the best stimulus for growth.

Working with Muthu Kumar and Amith Nadig in Mystik Vibes has been one of the most intensive and fulfilling learning spaces for me, along with the other Carnatic-esque collaborations – Apoorva Krishna, Varijashree, and the band Lakkshya I was a part of. I worked for a while with a Delhi-based drummer who made it clear that to even be on the same playing field, my sense of subdivisions of the beat had to be much more finely developed. All of this led to almost a decade of rhythmic explorations (still ongoing).

Bassist Mishko M'ba was a musical mentor to me for quite a few years and I learned a lot from playing with him, about approaching collaborations, listening, giving energy to the music, and playing in a more connected and grounded way.

Playing free (without a pre-existing structure or even a key) can be quite uncomfortable, but working with Arjun Chandran for many years, and then Nishad Pandey in Tinctures have been really rewarding and taught me a lot about co-creation and using dissonance as fuel for music.



Hari: Can you give us a small intro to the artist(s) behind all your surreal album arts? I must say Refuge has an absolutely understated but brilliant one. Who did that one? What was the concept note like?

Aman Mahajan: The Refuge album art is by Sonali Zohra [@danger.cat] and is one of my favourite album covers of all time. She's exceptionally creative, and this is her second work for Refuge. For the album cover, the basic concept was just 'piano in a forest', and we discussed the themes of each piece on the album in detail. There are in fact ten visual motifs on the poster that connect individually with the ten pieces on the album.

Hari: How do you find the Indian music scene currently? Shri Hariharan recently mentioned that independent music is the only hope for the music industry (I am paraphrasing here). What do you think about the scene now? Especially considering your home turfs in the south. Can you approach this question from the perspective of a curator of music?

Aman Mahajan: The independent music scene in India is quite promising right now. There is so much more musical exposure now compared to when I was first coming up in the scene. One of the challenges is originality. With forms of music that are new in the culture, speaking personally through the music is quite next level.

There is a lot of potential interest from audiences — I find the main challenge to be with venues. We need more music-first venues, dedicated to listening and enjoying music — whether in a quiet or more active sense. Audiences need to be able to trust the space, enjoy it, and know what to expect from it.

Hari: It's only March in the year, what are you looking forward to this year? In terms of tours, releases etc? Where can an ardent fan come find you for most of this year?

Aman Mahajan: I'm looking forward to a November residency and focus week in Reunion through JazzRenyon, where I will create and perform music with bassist Mishko M'ba and other musicians from the island.

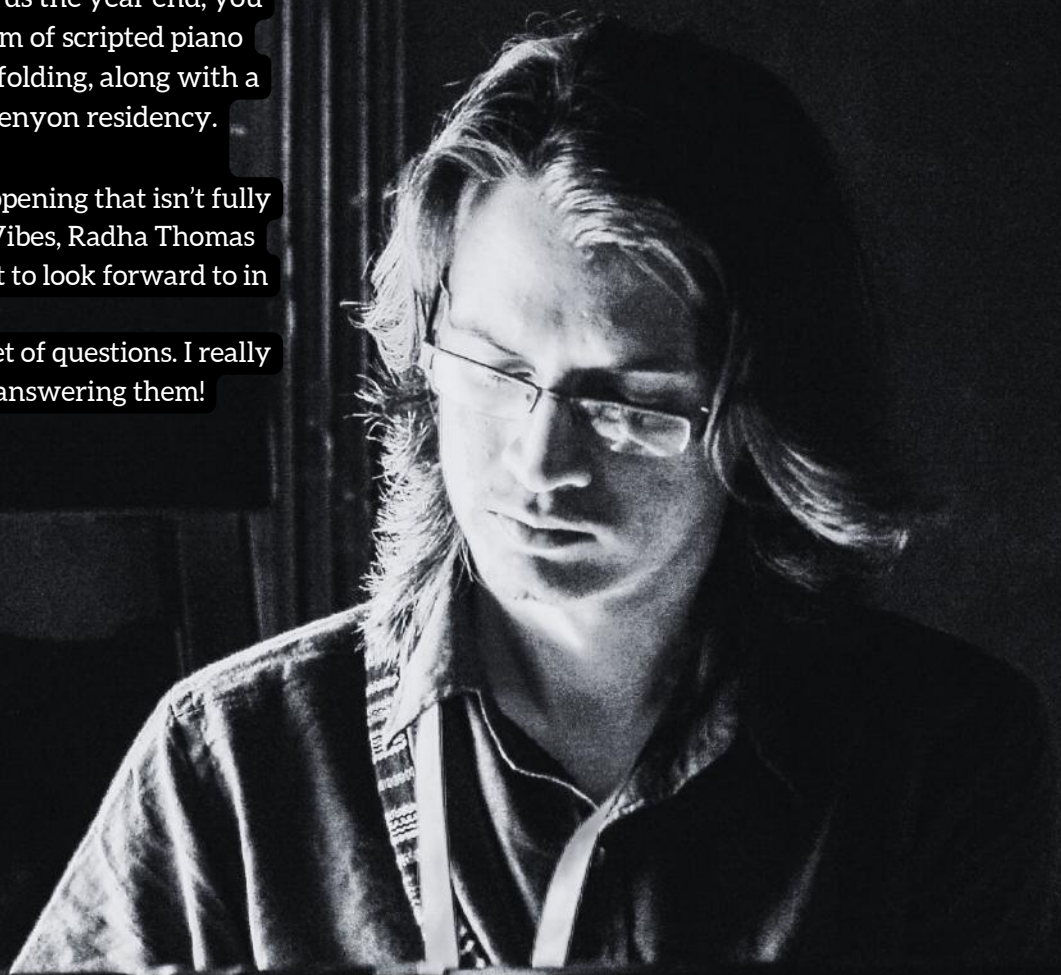
This year, I'm working on a new Refuge set that will be recorded once it's developed further. In line with this, there are going to be a lot more performances of the new material happening, so look out for one in your city!

The next Tinctures album According To The Tides will be out this summer, with some spacious free improvisation Nishad and I did in Berlin a few seasons ago — walking musical tightropes, and interfacing with the unknown. R-Evolution, the next Sage For The Ages album will be out on April 12 — songs by Kirtana Krishna that explore themes of climate, politics, memory and protest.

Quos Ego, my first duo album with Dhani Muniz on guitar, was just released last month. We used cinema, visual art and literature as stimuli to dissolve ourselves and create some immersive music. Additionally, towards the year end, you can expect to hear an album of scripted piano improvisations called Scaffolding, along with a live album from the JazzRenyon residency.

There is also a lot more happening that isn't fully planned yet, with Mystik Vibes, Radha Thomas and Apoorva Krishna. A lot to look forward to in 2026.

Thanks for this excellent set of questions. I really enjoyed introspecting and answering them!



ABOUT COLUMNIST

HARIKRISHNAN



Hari is one half of the Indian rock/alternative pop band The Indian Joint and is based in Bangalore. After a long career in advertising, he is now devoting his time to writing, composing, and writing about music. As a musician, he is primarily a guitarist but is also a multi-instrumentalist. He is currently working on his solo project.

Interview

A man with glasses, wearing a white patterned suit jacket and white trousers, is sitting on a black chair in a recording studio. He is holding a black electric guitar with a gold pickguard. The background is a wall covered in dark green acoustic foam. The floor is a mix of red carpet and wood. A small red JBL logo is visible on the chair.

NORHT 2UNES WOODALL

Crafting the Sound of Gumbo Music

North 2unes Woodall

FROM JAZZ TO FUNK: THE MANY FLAVORS OF 2UNES

North “2unes” Woodall is a name synonymous with versatility, energy, and musical excellence. As a performer, he has carved a unique space in the live music landscape by delivering world-class experiences tailored to the specific atmosphere of every event. Whether it’s an intimate cocktail gathering or a large-scale gala, North brings a level of professionalism and artistry that consistently leaves a lasting impression. His recent recognition in the 2025 Top 100 Smooth Jazz Songs of the Year highlights not only his talent but also his growing influence in the contemporary music scene.

What sets North apart is his ability to adapt. Performing under his brand “2unes,” he offers a fully scalable musical setup—from a sophisticated one-man band to a high-energy seven-piece ensemble. This flexibility allows him to cater to a wide variety of audiences and occasions, all while maintaining a signature sound that is both engaging and memorable. His repertoire spans across genres, including jazz, pop, funk, rock, and more, ensuring that every performance is uniquely curated to match the client’s vision.

At the core of his artistry is a philosophy rooted in diversity and expression. North describes his music as “Gumbo,” a fitting metaphor for a rich blend of styles and influences. Drawing inspiration from legendary musicians and shaped by years of experience performing with bands and sharing stages with iconic artists, his sound reflects both depth and accessibility. Combined with seamless execution and a strong connection to his audience, North “2unes” Woodall continues to stand out as a preferred choice for agencies and event organizers seeking exceptional live music.

LIM: You describe your sound as “Gumbo” music. What does that term mean to you as an artist?

N2W: All right. This is my version or meaning of what I mean when I say gumbo in my music to me. It means that I have so many different shades of in different styles for music. I have listened and learn from that's where I come up with it being a gumbo. Music so cuz it's rock is jazz is fun. It's hip hop it's dance. It's balance is a country and western is contemporary is everything there is about music from A to Z. That's how I come up with being gumbo music. Okay.

LIM: Your mother introduced you to the guitar at age eleven. How did that moment shape your musical journey?

N2W: Well by my mom buying the guitar my first guitar that is really the beginning of the whole journey because if she would not get me the guitar wouldn't have no story to tell and so that's it in the nutshell right there.

LIM: Artists like Ernie Isley, Carlos Santana, and Joe Walsh influenced your style. What did you learn from them?

N2W: I learned everything that I got came from get bits and pieces from all these talented artists and there's many more and that's how music is you take a little bit here and take a little bit there or the best way to just say it is it's like when you eating catfish you eat the meat and you leave the bones.

LIM: Being largely self-taught, what were the biggest challenges while developing your guitar skills?

N2W: I would say my biggest challenge was in being self-taught is learning new chords and which open up and learning different Solo or so that took a lot of more time of going and seeing people play and listening.

LIM: How did your early work with bands like The Delvones and Round Trip Ticket shape you as a performer?

N2W: The early years of playing with the bands from a high school and After High School such as the Devon and the round trip ticket. It shaped my it made my foundations. I'm learning how to deal with people and work with people and you know, people always show you two things either what to do or what not to do. And so if you pay attention that you will learn a lot





LIM: You've shared the stage with artists such as The Ohio Players and Roy Ayers. Any standout memories from those experiences?

N2W: Okay, my standout experience of playing on the stage with such artists as Ohio players and more as was and several different stages. In other artists. It's such a great feeling that you know to be on stage with Living Legends cuz they was living legend at the time cuz they had big hit songs out of that time and they allowed the band. I was in to perform before they came on in and you get to meet them and sit down and you learn a lot of things. So it was a great experience.

LIM: You're known for energetic live shows. What makes a great live performance in your view?

N2W: In my point of view what makes a great live show is the type band. The band has to be tight and we got the hype up the crowd and you feel the energy from the crowd and it makes you play better, especially when everybody in the band knows the music and they all into it and they moving cuz if you moving you looking like you having great fun you love them. What you do then that makes it easier for the crowd to get into it.

LIM: How has the music culture of Atlanta influenced your sound?

N2W: Atlanta has been great for us influenced me on my music and my sound cuz it's so much music here and it was already been here that I just picked up on it. and attitude what I was already building and and growing on so the Atlanta has a unique sound and I'm just still working at it.

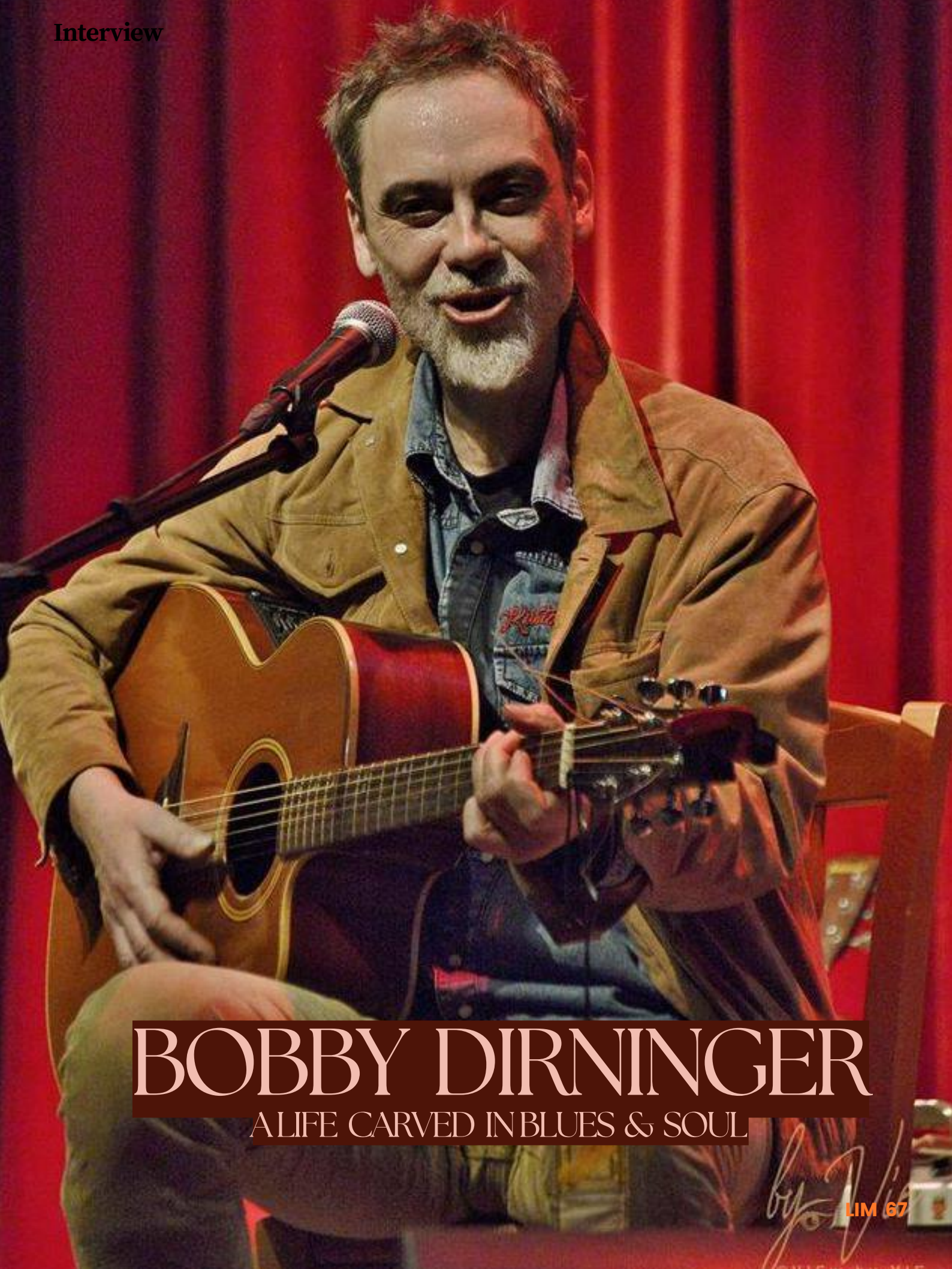
LIM: Your music blends many genres and generations. Why is that important to you?

N2W: It's important to me because music is like a medicine and it doesn't matter to me. What age you are from one to 150. If you stay open you will get something out of it. And so it's in because the listener to me is the most important person because if anybody played it would be very boring. So the listener is the one the most important person to me. And that makes the blend so when you got a lot of different kind of people that's liking what you plan. It just makes you feel good. And you know cuz you making them feel good.

LIM: What can fans expect next from 2unes?

N2W: Well, what's coming up next from Tuesday? I got a brand new song in this car on the move and I got a brand new video. It's out. It's going to be out and so it's energetic and the kind of a music can dance to or drive to or clean up or just sit around and listen to it. So and I'm keep coming out with up Temple tunes and so till I get you dancing.

Interview



BOBBY DIRNINGER

A LIFE CARVED IN BLUES & SOUL

Bobby Dirninger

A Life Carved in Blues & Soul

Bobby Dirninger's journey through music is not just a career—it is a story of survival, transformation, and unwavering devotion to sound. A French singer-songwriter deeply rooted in blues and folk traditions, his work carries the raw honesty of lived experience, shaped across decades between France and Chicago. Often compared to the likes of Bob Dylan, Neil Young, and Crosby, Stills & Nash, Dirninger's music is less about imitation and more about immersion—absorbing the spirit of American roots music and translating it through a deeply personal lens.

Over a career spanning more than 40 years, Bobby has walked what he himself describes as a “long, dusty, tough and beautiful path.” From humble beginnings playing in small bars, cafés, and even on the streets of France, to performing on international stages and collaborating with blues legends, his evolution reflects both struggle and resilience. Music, for him, was never simply a profession—it was a lifeline, a second birth that reshaped his identity and purpose.

What sets Dirninger apart is the intensity of his relationship with music. It is not merely a craft, but a calling—something he describes almost as a “religion.” His early connection with blues and folk music, especially the works of Bob Dylan, opened a door to a form of expression that was both healing and transformative. Over time, that connection led him to Chicago, the heart of blues, where he immersed himself in the culture and learned directly from the roots of the genre. One of the most defining chapters of his career has been his long-standing association with Chicago blues singer Zora Young. What began as an uncertain opportunity—stepping in as a replacement musician—evolved into a decades-long relationship built on mentorship, trust, and shared musical passion. Their collaboration resulted in the critically acclaimed album *The French Connection*, which topped the US Blues Charts and earned recognition at the Blues Music Awards. For Dirninger, this partnership was not just professional—it was deeply personal, marking one of the most meaningful connections in his life. Throughout his journey, Bobby has remained committed to authenticity. Whether writing, performing, or producing, his approach is guided by instinct and emotion rather than formula. His creative process is unpredictable—songs arrive suddenly, often during moments of change or travel, and must be captured quickly before their essence fades. This spontaneity is central to his artistry, giving his music a sense of immediacy and truth.

Today, as the music industry continues to evolve, Dirninger embraces new platforms like YouTube to share his work with a global audience, while reflecting on the changing landscape for musicians. Despite the challenges, his passion remains undiminished. For him, music is still about connection—about telling stories, expressing emotion, and reaching people across cultures and borders.

In this conversation, Emma speaks with Bobby Dirninger about his journey, his influences, and the philosophy that continues to guide his life in music.

Emma: You have had a long and exciting career in music so far, how do you see it yourself?

Bobby Dirninger: Thank you! Yes, it's been a long, dusty, tough, and beautiful path. I was 16 when I learned the guitar, and it was just like a lifeline (bouée de sauvetage) for me because I really was a lost kid at that time. So it was like a second birth for me, for many reasons. I hated the person I was, until Alain (my real first name) became Bobby, the singer/guitar player. I have no idea what I would have become if I hadn't done so, if I hadn't sung and played my music. Maybe I wouldn't even be alive today anymore. Who knows? Anyway, I became a new person then—a person who only fought for the music he loved, a kind of religion, you know? A hardcore religion.

Emma: Who are your musical influences? How did you pick up music as a career option?

Bobby Dirninger: The Blues. Folk music, Bob Dylan. Mostly American rooted music in the beginning. It spoke to me so deeply. A musical career was the only option for me. Nothing else interested me. Plus, I really believe playing music and singing healed my soul. It's Bob Dylan who once said, "Life is not about finding yourself, or finding anything else. Life is about creating yourself."

Emma: How do you go about your music creation? How are the songs written and produced?





Bobby Dirninger: I don't have a clue about the process of creation. I noticed recently that the creation process comes suddenly and doesn't last very long. During a few weeks, songs come to me almost naturally, effortlessly. In a few minutes, the structure of the songs is done. Then comes the process for the lyrics, but it has to come quickly too. Otherwise, you lose the spontaneity of it. It has to match the music, you know? And if it doesn't happen quickly, it becomes harder and harder to find the right lyrics. Music and lyrics have a secret connection between them. But after this composition and writing momentum, long years can pass without any ideas or inspiration. I guess it comes easier while traveling long distances, when you are far from home, or going through big changes in your life. Then, when the songs are written, it depends on the style of the songs, but for recording, I prefer to change everything from one album to another—musicians, musical style, way of recording.

Emma: Where can we see your music releases online? Tell us about your latest or upcoming release.

Bobby Dirninger: A lot of my work is on YouTube. Mostly there. You just type Bobby Dirninger and you'd find a lot of my music. I know a lot is on Spotify too, but there is more on YouTube. My new releases will only be on YouTube. I don't think I will record new CDs anymore, because CDs don't sell well anymore. I don't even think I still have a CD player at home, you know?

Emma: You have worked with a number of greats. Who are the musicians you loved working with the most and why?

Bobby Dirninger: I have been a long-time piano and guitar player for Chicago blues singer Zora Young. Our collaboration lasted almost 20 years. Well, I shouldn't say collaboration—she taught me so much. Let's say I was her student. But later on, I recorded two CDs with her, both in Chicago for the legendary label Delmark. I even produced her second one, "French Connection," which topped the US Radio Blues Charts in 2010 and got Zora nominated for Best Female Blues Singer at the US Blues Music Awards. Zora has quit the business now for several years, and I miss her so much you cannot even imagine. I deeply love her. I owe her so much. She was like a mother to me. Otherwise, yes, I did tour with other blues greats such as Muddy Waters' guitar player John Primer and others. In France, I became friends with the singer Nilda Fernandez, but he sadly passed away before we had the chance to collaborate.

Emma: What do you like to do the most in music—writing, producing, or performing live?

Bobby Dirninger: I have always loved playing live. But the best moment for me is when a new song comes to me. Then it's just magic. These moments are priceless.

Emma: What are your immediate future plans for 2025 or 2026?

Bobby Dirninger: I celebrate this year my 40th anniversary as a professional musician. I began playing in winter 1985 in a piano bar in Strasbourg, France, every Sunday and Tuesday night from 10 pm to 4 am—250 francs a night. At that time, I only knew how to play five or six numbers on the piano, and I didn't have a piano to practice at home. I even wonder if I had a home at that time. So I played these songs in different orders so no one would realize I was always playing the same stuff. It was a long time ago now, but it feels like yesterday. So yes, the next two years will be an important milestone for me.



I will try to celebrate it in a great way, playing concerts with my band and performing songs I haven't played for a long time. Alongside that, I continue working on new projects and songs that I will mostly release on YouTube.

Emma: Among all your collaborations, which one is the dearest to you and why?

Bobby Dirninger: Zora Young. I think I told you why before. I met her in 1991 when I had to replace a piano player for a tour in Switzerland. I didn't have the level for it and played terribly at the first show. She could have fired me, but she didn't. Maybe she thought I would end up begging in the streets if she did.

After that, she always asked for me when touring Europe, and I improved over time. Twenty years later, we made an album together that reached number one in the US Blues Charts. It felt like I had paid a little of my dues to her.

Emma: What was the best advice given to you, and what would you give as advice to fellow musicians?

Bobby Dirninger: Zora's advice. When we reached number one in the US and were nominated for awards, she told me, "Don't ever let anybody steal that from you." I didn't understand at the time, but I do now.

I would advise musicians to travel as much as they can. You don't get recognition in your hometown. When you travel, people see you differently—and you become someone else too. There is always something to find when you are far from home.

Emma: Please update us on your musical journey since we spoke last time.

Bobby Dirninger: I started in 1985 playing in small places—bars, cafés, even streets across France. Then I went to Chicago to learn the blues. I recorded my first CD in 1998 and many more after that. I've played nearly 3000 concerts in many places—Europe, the US, Africa, and Russia.

Emma: Any final words for our readers?

Bobby Dirninger: "If you sing, sing for yourself first, for ignorance is quick to despise." (Felix Leclerc).

It's a long and hard road, maybe even harder today. But YouTube is a great way to reach people now. You don't need a label anymore, and you have complete artistic freedom.

I already have half a million listeners and viewers online—something I would never have reached with CDs or concerts alone. And who knows what can happen once your music is out there?

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.

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JULY 2025

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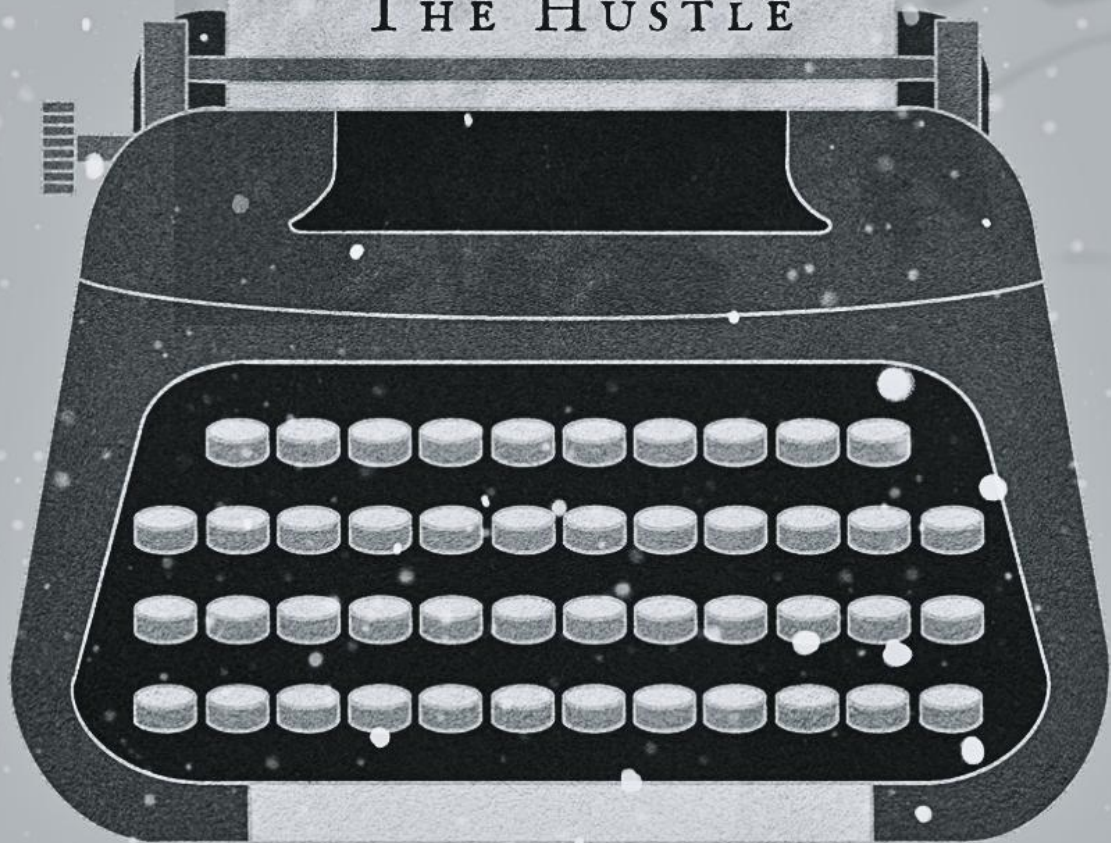
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NO SHORTCUTS, JUST HEART

THROUGH CORRIDORS

THE QUIET
BURNOUT
BEHIND
THE HUSTLE



Lyia Meta

The Quiet Burnout Behind The Hustle

by Lyia Meta

"I've looked at clouds from both sides now,
From up and down, and still somehow..." — Joni Mitchell

It is a kind of tiredness that arrives slowly, almost politely, until it settles so deeply that it becomes difficult to separate from ordinary life.

This is the burnout that does not announce itself through collapse or dramatic withdrawal. It grows quietly inside the rhythm of continuing.

The experience is not simply physical exhaustion, although fatigue may accompany it. More often it feels like something internal has shifted slightly out of alignment. The certainty that once gave work its emotional direction begins to fade into something harder to reach, as if meaning has moved just beyond immediate grasp.

The love for the work rarely disappears.

What changes is the space around it.

Independent creative life is built on movement. Personal responsibilities exist beside professional obligations. Creative projects sit alongside administrative and planning tasks that are necessary even when they are not visible to audiences.

Behind every completed work are many unseen actions. Responding to messages, evaluating opportunities, organising details, and thinking about what comes next are all part of sustaining the work itself.

Many independent artists are effectively managing entire creative ecosystems.

They are creator, communicator, planner, strategist, and executor of their own careers. Some move across multiple creative disciplines, carrying more than one form of expression within the same life.

The art is only one part of the work.

The rest is maintenance.

Maintenance is constant. It does not draw attention to itself. It simply exists in the background of daily life.

There is always something else to check, consider, or prepare. Even quiet moments are rarely completely still because the mind continues running through unresolved tasks.

For many, the question is not whether something meaningful has been created.

The question is whether enough has been done.

Enough visibility. Enough outreach. Enough presence. Enough momentum.

In a career shaped by attention, visibility can begin to function as informal currency. Activity is often interpreted as progress. Inactivity can start to feel like stagnation.

The digital environment reinforces this pressure. Consistency and repetition are rewarded more than interruption or pause.

Rest therefore becomes complicated.

A pause can feel accompanied by internal awareness of what is not being done. Ideas may appear during moments intended for recovery. Breaks can carry a quiet sense of unfinished obligation.

Rest begins to feel uncomfortable when survival seems tied to continuous movement.

These pressures are not always imposed directly by others. They often emerge quietly from professionalism, responsibility, or self expectation.

Over time, the boundary between work and existence becomes less distinct.

Burnout in this context is not usually sudden.

It is not always expressed as physical breakdown. It can appear as persistent fatigue, emotional heaviness that is difficult to explain, or a gradual distancing from the inner certainty that once gave purpose to the work.

The desire and the ability to create may remain intact.

What changes is the emotional grounding that once connected the work to the sense of self. It can feel as if something essential has been covered by layers of obligation, expectation, and forward momentum.

The work continues because stopping feels uncertain. The structure of an independent career often depends on continuous motion, or at least the perception of it.

Another layer of quiet burnout is the feeling of being undervalued in a way that is not openly confrontational but still persistent.

There is often the sense that more could always be given, while what has already been given rarely feels sufficient.

Creative opportunities are sometimes framed as privilege rather than labour. Exposure may be offered as compensation. Appreciation may be expressed generously while expectations remain quietly high. Passion can unintentionally become a mechanism through which imbalance is tolerated.

Opportunities are often accepted because they feel meaningful, because they feel like progress, because saying yes feels natural when something matters.

But yes accumulates.

Yes becomes responsibility.

Yes becomes expectation.

Over time, yes can become the default response long before the true cost of that answer is understood. This leads back to the recurring question.

Is this enough?

Not about the quality of the art itself. The creative impulse often remains strong. The desire to create does not disappear.

The moment an idea forms, that uncertain space where possibility begins carries its own emotional energy. From conception to release, creation remains personally meaningful.

Many artists understand early that originality matters. Value is not found in repeating what already exists, but in contributing something honest and personal.

Once this understanding is reached, it is rarely abandoned.

The contradiction at the centre of creative burnout is that the love for the work survives while the weight surrounding the work grows.

Responsibility, visibility pressure, career maintenance, and self management accumulate.

Independent artists often become highly adaptive. They learn technical, marketing, and communication skills because adaptation is necessary in a changing creative landscape.

Resilience develops because there is rarely another alternative.

But resilience is not inexhaustibility.

The ability to continue is not the same as the ability to rest.

Quiet burnout exists in the distance between those states.

It lives between passion and pressure, between creative identity and practical survival, between artistic purpose and long term endurance.

Speaking about exhaustion is not always comfortable.

Gratitude is expected. Passion is assumed. Perseverance is admired.

Yet acknowledging human limits is not rejection of the work.

It is recognition that creative life is still human life.

The cultural narrative surrounding creativity often celebrates relentless effort. Hustle is framed as virtue. Productivity is treated as proof of dedication. Constant motion is interpreted as commitment.

But creativity has never truly flourished under permanent pressure.

Art requires psychological and emotional space.

It requires reflection, stillness, and the freedom to observe without immediately converting experience into output.

Without that space, creation can slowly shift toward maintenance rather than meaning.

Maintenance keeps a career functioning.

Creation gives it purpose.

Both are necessary. They are not the same.

There may come a quiet, personal moment when sustainability begins to matter more than intensity.

Burnout does not necessarily mean failure.

It signals humanity.

It signals limits.

It signals the need to rebuild the relationship between work and life so that the work can continue without consuming the self that creates it.

Sustainability requires boundaries.

It requires redefining productivity beyond constant visibility.

It requires understanding that presence alone is not the same as impact.

It requires accepting that momentum can pause without ending the journey.

The journey of an independent artist is often described as solitary, driven by passion, persistence, and individual will.

Independence does not have to mean isolation.

Discussions about exhaustion, boundaries, and sustainability are not signs of weakness.

They are signs that creative communities are learning how to endure without burning themselves away.

Burnout does not always look like stopping.

Sometimes it looks like continuing while never feeling fully permitted to rest.

Perhaps the most quietly radical act is the belief that rest is not a threat to momentum, but the foundation that allows momentum to survive.

There is no deeper conviction than the choice to continue pursuing a life built around passion and creativity, not because it is easy, but because it is the way meaning chooses to live.

ABOUT COLUMNIST

LYIA META



Lyia Meta is an international, multi-award-winning singer, songwriter, and producer, and the founder of Lyia Meta VoiceCraft Studio. In addition to her studio work, she teaches vocals at Yamaha Music (Sonata). A featured artist on the GRAMMY®-nominated album *THE FURY* by Antonio Vergara, Lyia is also a GRAMMY® Voting Member of The Recording Academy. Beyond music, her creative work extends into visual art and writing, with two published books: *Unfold, Break, Rebuild, Find Yourself* and *All In, No Net – Life on Stage*.

Her musical influences are wide-ranging and distinctive, spanning rock, gothic rock, contemporary blues, traditional pop, jazz pop, folk, traditional country, country blues, soul, R&B, and symphonic rock. This diverse palette fuels a fearless approach to artistry, with each project breaking new ground and defying easy categorization. As a full-time performer and creative force, Lyia continues expanding her artistic reach, leaving a lasting imprint across music, visual art, literature, and vocal mentorship.

THE JOHN ANTHONY

GUITAR CONTEST

WE ARE BACK

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4TH EDITION WINNERS

THE FINALISTS

The John Anthony Guitar Contest was an exciting celebration of musical talent, creativity, and passion for the guitar. Submissions officially opened on August 15, and from the very beginning, there was an overwhelming response. A flurry of entries poured in from guitarists across different regions, each bringing their own unique style and sound.

Following the submission phase, the contest moved into a long and engaging period of open voting, which ran from December through February. During this time, audiences enthusiastically supported their favorite performers, helping narrow down the pool to the most outstanding finalists.

Once the finalists were selected, an esteemed panel of international judges took on the responsibility of choosing the ultimate winners. From the top three finalists in each category—electric and acoustic—the judges carefully evaluated technique, creativity, expression, and overall performance.

ELECTRIC GUITAR

| Artists | % Votes | Rank |
|-------------------------|---------|------|
| Varun Menon | 24.68% | 1 |
| Anirudh G Tewari | 19.10% | 2 |
| Justus Daniel | 16.97% | 3 |

ACOUSTIC GUITAR

| Artists | % Votes | Rank |
|---------------------------|---------|------|
| Sengmitjrang Momin | 7.93% | 1 |
| Tanish Mathew | 6.31% | 2 |
| Sidharth Praveen | 5.47% | 3 |

% votes are based on overall voting and no category wise voting was allowed to avoid any duplication.



— WINNERS OF — **JOHN ANTHONY** GUITAR CONTEST

EDITION 4 – ACOUSTIC & ELECTRIC GUITAR

ACOUSTIC GUITAR WINNER



SENGMITJRANG MOMIN

7.98% OF OVERALL
VOTES SECURED!

2/4 JUDGES VOTES
SECURED!

ELECTRIC GUITAR WINNER



JUSTUS DANIEL

16.97% OPEN VOTES
SECURED!

100% JUDGES VOTES
SECURED: 4/4

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JUSTUS DANIEL

WINNER SPEAKS



LIM 80

Justus Daniel

John Anthony Guitar Contest winner speaks to Lazie Indie Magazine

Jay: Congratulations on winning the John Anthony Guitar Contest 2025! What was your immediate reaction when you found out you had won?

JD: For a few seconds, I honestly thought I had read it wrong.

When I first saw the announcement for the John Anthony Guitar Contest, my immediate reaction was disbelief. I actually went back and read the entire post word by word just to make sure I wasn't misunderstanding it. Only after reading it again did it slowly sink in that I had actually won.

The first person I told was my mom, who was in the kitchen cooking something delicious at the time. I remember walking in and sharing the news, and seeing her reaction made the moment feel real.

After that, I went straight to my elder brother, who was also my first guitar mentor. As a kid, I used to sit around during his guitar classes and try to play whatever I could on the instrument. In many ways, my musical journey started by simply watching him play.

Sharing that moment with both of them felt incredibly special. Seeing how happy and proud they were made the experience even more emotional for me. It reminded me that this win is not just about a contest result—it represents the years of encouragement, support, and inspiration that my family gave me from the very beginning.

Jay: Tell us about your musical journey. When did you first start playing the guitar, and what inspired you to pursue it seriously?

JD: My musical journey actually started when I was very young. My elder brother used to teach guitar, and I would constantly disturb his classes because I wanted to play the guitar myself. I would grab the instrument and start making up little songs of my own.

My dad noticed this curiosity and did something very special—he made me a small custom guitar from excess wood from our sofa set. It was roughly the size of a ukulele and had only three strings, but for me it was magical. That simple instrument pushed me to explore music further and appreciate the encouragement my dad and brother had given me.

From there I kept practicing every day, listening to and learning from many different styles of music—rock, ghazal, metal, jazz, Sufi, and Christian contemporary. Exploring such a wide range of music helped me develop a sense of musicality—understanding what to play, when to play, and sometimes most importantly, what not to play.

Jay: Your performance in the contest really stood out. How did you approach preparing your submission, and what was your creative process behind the piece you performed?

JD: The solo I performed for the contest was actually my own composition. When I write music or solos, I like to think of them as telling a story or taking the listener on a journey.

For this particular piece, I was inspired by the way Makoto Shinkai uses colour and emotion in films like *Your Name* and *Weathering with You*. The vibrant and sometimes chaotic moments in those films gave me the idea of portraying a burst of colours through music. To express that feeling, I incorporated modal changes in the solo to create the sense of shifting shades and emotions.

Interestingly, I composed this piece on the same week as my birthday. Looking back now, it almost feels like a gift to myself, especially since that very solo ended up winning the contest.

Jay: Every guitarist has influences. Which musicians or genres have played the biggest role in shaping your playing style?



JD: That's actually a difficult question to answer because my influences come from many places. The first and most important influence has to be my elder brother, Titus Daniel. Growing up, I was always in awe of him—not just as a guitarist but also as my first mentor. As I started exploring music on my own, bands like Green Day, LinkinPark, and Paramore became some of my evergreen favourites. Later on, Switchfoot gave me a fresh perspective on rock music, and Delirious? really pushed the boundaries of what Christian contemporary music could sound like.

In terms of guitar playing, bands like Dream Theater, CHON, Polyphia, and Covet really helped take my guitar skills and musical understanding to the next level.

The genres I naturally gravitate towards—both in listening and playing—are math-rock, progressive rock, punk-rock, pop, city-pop, J-rock, Post-rock and Christian contemporary rock.

Jay: Competitions can be both exciting and challenging. What was the most demanding part of preparing for this contest, and what did you learn from the experience?

JD: The most demanding part for me was actually overcoming self-doubt and finding the confidence to push myself. To be honest, I almost didn't submit the video. At one point I kept thinking, "Is it even worth submitting? I probably won't win anyway."

Like many musicians, I tend to be my own biggest critic. I keep analyzing every note and every phrase, sometimes a little too much.

But eventually I reminded myself that growth only happens when we try. There's an old saying that stayed with me through this experience: "Try and fail, but never fail to try." In the end, I decided to take that step and submit the piece anyway. Looking back now, that decision itself feels just as important as the result.

Jay: Reaching the finals meant your playing would be evaluated by legendary guitarists such as Steve Lynch, Will Johns, Brian Tarquin, and Rick Bouwman. What went through your mind when you realized you had made it to the final round?

JD: My first reaction was pure excitement—goosebumps, honestly. But a few seconds later I was right back to nail-biting mode because the final decision was still to be made.

What really struck me was the thought that my own composition and my work would be heard by such legendary musicians. That alone felt like a huge honor.

When the results were finally announced and I saw that all four judges had selected me, it was genuinely shocking, humbling, and emotional.

In that moment I just felt incredibly blessed and grateful for everyone who has played a role in my journey as a musician.





Jay: Looking ahead, what's next for you? Are there any upcoming musical projects, collaborations, or goals you're excited to pursue after this win?

JD: Recently, I released my album "Beyond the Bounds," which has been a very meaningful project for me. I'm planning to submit it to the Inter-Continental Music Awards, and I'm excited to see how it connects with a wider audience. At the moment, I'm also working on a new personal EP project, which is still untitled. Alongside that, I'm planning to release a new single around July.

For me, the goal is to keep creating music, exploring new ideas, and continuing to grow as both a guitarist and a songwriter. Outside of music, I also enjoy writing science fiction and medieval fantasy web novels. One of my completed works is *The Rewrite Paradox*, which is fully released online. Storytelling has always fascinated me, whether through music or through writing.

At the moment, I'm also in the early stages of writing a new medieval fantasy story. It's still a long journey ahead, but I'm enjoying exploring that world and developing the story.

JAGC JUDGES SPEAK ABOUT JUSTUS DANIEL



STEVE LYNCH

Justus Daniel has a very unique way of expressing himself on the instrument. He played with finesse and conviction while combining a variety of techniques that showcase his diverse talents. I believe his ability to play technical phrases with feeling puts him at the top of the list.



RICK BOUWMAN

Justus Daniel has a lot of melody, Lot of speed, Lot of technique and it seems he plays it rather easily too so i choose him



BRIAN TARQUIN

My Choice is Justus Daniel for electric guitar



WILL JOHNS

Justus' delivery was extra smooth and played with great accuracy and his use of the tremolo arm was effective and not over played. Well done, great performance

Carmelia Tales

An Intimate Evening Of Music, Stories & Soulful Moments
Moments In The Heart Of Nature

13 AD



Carmelia Tales
Rock , Roots and Real Stories

Carmelia Tales

An interim note from the Journey” a personal take from Jay Pillai

*** the photos used are candid photos from Dilip Nair at Carmelia Haven Resort

There are ideas—and then there are leaps of faith.

Carmelia Tales began somewhere in between.

When we first sat down with the thought of creating something beyond the pages of Lazie Indie Magazine, we weren't entirely sure what shape it would take. The idea was clear in spirit but uncertain in form. Could music be experienced differently? Could storytelling move beyond interviews and articles into something more immersive, more alive? And perhaps the biggest question of all—would people actually travel to a remote forest resort, nestled inside a cardamom estate, to be part of something so unconventional?

Doubts were inevitable. Questions came in waves. What would the format even look like? A concert? A documentary? An interview series? A retreat? Or something that didn't yet have a name?

And then came the deeper question—how does this connect back to Lazie Indie Magazine? To everything we stood for? To the idea of independent music, of stories that deserve to be told, of spaces that feel real and unfiltered? Somewhere between those questions, Carmelia Tales found its identity—not as a format, but as an experience. And once that clicked, the next question became the most crucial one: who would be the first to step into this unknown with us? We chose 13 AD.

Looking back now, it feels less like a decision and more like destiny.

Because in hindsight, I can say this with complete clarity—I am so glad, and honestly relieved, that we made that choice. 13 AD didn't just agree to be a part of Carmelia Tales—they embraced it, elevated it, and in many ways, defined it. From the very beginning, they stood with us—not as performers alone, but as collaborators in spirit. They lent their presence not just on stage, but off it too—supporting us through promotions, conversations, and every step leading up to the event. There was a sense of trust, of shared belief, that cannot be manufactured. It has to be felt. And then came the night.

What unfolded was not just a performance—it was a statement.

We had planned for a one-and-a-half-hour set. That was the agreement. That was the structure. But what happened next is something only true musicians—true indie spirits—can deliver. They played for two and a half hours. Non-stop. No hesitation. No holding back. Just pure, relentless music.

And the crowd? They didn't want it to end. Neither did the band. That's what commitment looks like. That's what passion sounds like. That—that—is the spirit of rock 'n' roll. The spirit of independent music. No boundaries, no clock, no compromise. Just connection.

But Carmelia Tales was never meant to be about just one moment or one act. It was a journey, layered and unfolding.

The evening began with Riya and Rosanne Anthony—two artists who didn't just open the show, but owned the stage in their own right. There was a confidence, a presence, and a quiet power in the way they set the tone. And even after the high of the 13 AD performance, they returned—carrying the night forward, stretching it into something that felt timeless.

Somewhere in between all of this, something unexpected happened. I was pulled onto the stage.

And in that moment, the lines blurred. Organizer, curator, planner—all of it faded. I sang a Lazie J song, shedding whatever inhibitions I had held onto. Because really—who am I at the core? An indie musician.

And maybe that's what Carmelia Tales is truly about. Stripping away roles. Returning to the essence.

Behind the scenes, there was another kind of magic unfolding—one that often goes unseen but is deeply felt.

The owners of the resort had everything arranged with a level of precision and care that deserves to be spoken about. From accommodation to travel, from refreshments to stage setup—every detail was thought through. And not just for a perfect scenario—they planned for everything.

Plan A. Plan B. Plan C.





Even contingencies like stage covering were ready to go, just in case the skies decided to intervene. Thankfully, the rain stayed away—but the preparedness spoke volumes. It allowed us to focus on what mattered—creating the experience. And what a place it was.

A forest resort set within a cardamom estate—lush, immersive, almost cinematic. The kind of location that doesn't just host an event but becomes a character in the story itself. It was only when everything came together—the music, the conversations, the people, the landscape—that the true meaning of Carmelia Tales revealed itself. This wasn't just about a band. It wasn't just about a show.

It was about capturing something intangible—an intersection of sound, story, and setting.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the people who stood behind it.

Our camera team, led by Adithya, is now working tirelessly—almost on a war footing—to bring this entire experience to life visually. Every frame is being handled with care, with precision, with the understanding that this isn't just documentation—it's storytelling. Then there were friends who showed up not out of obligation, but out of belief.

Paul, Dilip, and Ramesh—who traveled all the way from Trivandrum to be a part of this. That kind of effort doesn't go unnoticed. It becomes part of the story.

Our partner from KACV, associated with IIMF, also made the journey to support us—another reminder that when something is built with sincerity, people rally around it. And perhaps one of the most defining choices we made was to keep the gathering intimate. Entry was restricted. Carefully curated. Not to exclude—but to protect the experience. Because this wasn't meant to be just another event. It was meant to be captured. Filmed. Told. A story where the band, the audience, and the environment all coexist in harmony. Where every face, every reaction, every note contributes to a larger narrative. And as we now wait—for the videos, for the edits, for the final cut—there's a quiet sense of anticipation. Because we know this is just the beginning.

Carmelia Tales started as a question. It became an experience. And soon, it will become a story that travels far beyond that forest, that stage, that night. Looking back, the doubts feel distant. Necessary, perhaps—but distant. What remains is the feeling. Of having created something real. Something honest.

Something that didn't just happen—but meant something. And if this first chapter is anything to go by, Carmelia Tales isn't just a project. It's a world waiting to be explored.



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