

ROCKOn

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STEVE VAH

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STEVE VAI



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FOREVER GONE BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN

Raquel Welch

September 5, 1940 – February 15, 2023

Welch first won attention for her role in *Fantastic Voyage* (1966), after which she won a contract with 20th Century Fox. They lent her contract to the British studio Hammer Film Productions, for whom she made *One Million Years B.C.* (1966). Although Welch had only three lines of dialogue in the film, images of her in the doe-skin bikini became bestselling posters that turned her into an international sex symbol.



Suzanne Somers

October 16th, 1946 - October 15th, 2023

Suzanne Marie Somers was an American actress, author, and businesswoman in the health and wellness industry. She played the television roles of Chrissy Snow on *Three's Company* and Carol Foster Lambert on *Step by Step*.



Tina Turner

November 26, 1939 – May 24, 2023

Tina Turner was a singer, songwriter and actress. Known as the "Queen of Rock 'n' Roll", she rose to prominence as the lead singer of the Ike & Tina Turner Revue before launching a successful career as a solo performer. She was noted for her "swagger, sensuality, powerful gravelly vocals and unstoppable energy", along with her well-publicized history with ex-husband Ike Turner and her famous legs.



Jim Hines

September 10, 1946 – June 3, 2023

James Ray Hines OLY was an American track and field athlete and National Football League (NFL) player, who held the 100-meter world record for 15 years. In 1968, he became the first man to officially break the 10-second barrier in the 100 meters, and won individual and relay gold at the Mexico City Olympics.



Jimmy Buffet

December 25, 1946 - September 1, 2023

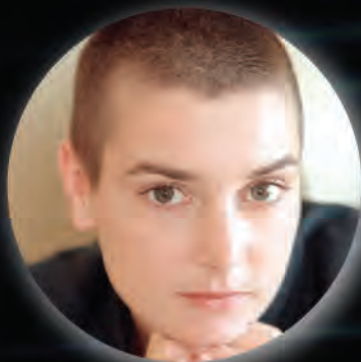
James William Buffett was an American musician and singer-songwriter. He was best known for his tropical rock music, which often portrayed a lifestyle described as "island escapism" and promoted enjoying life and following passions. Buffett recorded hit songs known as "The Big 8": "Margaritaville". He formed the Coral Reefer Band in 1975.



Sinead O'Connor

December 8, 1966 - July 26, 2023

Sinéad Marie Bernadette O'Connor was an Irish singer, songwriter, and activist. Her debut studio album, *The Lion and the Cobra*, was released in 1987 and achieved international chart success. Her 1990 album, *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*, was her biggest commercial success, selling over seven million copies worldwide.



Tony Bennett

August 3, 1926 - July 21, 2023

Anthony Dominick Benedetto, known professionally as Tony Bennett, was an American jazz and traditional pop singer. He received many accolades, including 20 Grammy Awards, a Lifetime Achievement Award, and two Primetime Emmy Awards. Bennett was named an NEA Jazz Master and a Kennedy Center Honoree and founded the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts in Astoria, Queens, New York. He sold more than 50 million records worldwide and earned a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



Rudolph Isley

April 1, 1939 - October 11, 2023

Rudolph "Rudy" Bernard Isley was an American singer-songwriter and one of the founding members of The Isley Brothers. Following "Shout", the brothers recorded for other labels with modest success with exceptions including the top 40 hit, "Twist & Shout" and the Motown hit, "This Old Heart of Mine (Is Weak for You)". In the 1960s, Rudy and his brothers founded the T-Neck Records label to promote their recordings.



Lisa Marie Presley

February 1, 1968 - January 12, 2023

Lisa Marie Presley was an American singer and songwriter. She was the child of singer and actor Elvis Presley and actress Priscilla Presley, as well as the sole heir to her father's estate after her grandfather and her great-grandmother died. Her musical career consisted of three studio albums: *To Whom It May Concern*, *Now What* and *Storm & Grace*, with *To Whom It May Concern* being certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America. Presley also released non-album singles, including duets with her father using tracks he had released before he died.



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Foreigner at Forty Five

By Jay Luster

FOREIGNER



When I first got into it, I was inspired by people who had come before me, and I found myself in the position of handing that on.
-Mick Jones

In March of 1977, just a few months ahead of their first album release, Foreigner dropped the single "Feels Like The First Time." A few weeks later, the song reached #4 on the charts. Critics like pigeon holes, and they just weren't sure which one the song fit into. With its hard-rocking guitar, whirling synthesizer, and Lou Gramm's powerful voice, Feels like the First Time was, quite simply, kick ass rock and roll and no matter what the critics thought, the kids loved it. When the album hit the store racks, it sold five million copies in the United States alone. The singles "Cold As Ice," and "Long Long Way From Home," joined Feels Like The First Time as concert powerhouses, and over the next decades, the band would release albums and singles, which would make them legendary.

Along the way, there was drug use, infighting, near fatal illnesses, and personnel changes. Eventually, this left Mick Jones as the only original member in the band. Jones started Foreigner after the break-up of Spooky Tooth. He had found the right musicians, but had a hard time finding the right vocalist to bring his musical vision to life.

After an extensive and time consuming search, he was introduced to Lou Gramm. Gramm had been working in the Rochester, New York area and was glad to come to New York to work with Jones. After all, it's not everyday you get an invite from one of the greatest guitar players of his generation. Once the band was assembled there were four Americans, and two Britons, and with that lineup, no matter where they were they'd always be foreigners. Puns aside, the name Foreigner became synonymous with great records, and great concerts.

We had a chance to catch up with Michael Bluestein, the keyboard player with the band. Bluestein joined Foreigner in 2008, and has been with them ever since. In the late 1980's he studied music at the prestigious Berklee College Of Music in Boston, and then moved to the San Francisco Bay area. His touring history reads like a copy of Who's Who of the music industry. Over the years, he's played with Boz Scaggs, Roger Hodgson, and Stevie Nicks. When he received the invite to try out for Foreigner, he was touring with the Latin king of pop, Enrique Iglesias, but ready for a new challenge.

Jay Luster, Rock On Magazine:

Hi, thanks for agreeing to speak with me. Foreigner is touring again?

Michael Bluestein:

Yeah, we're heading out for about six weeks or so.

ROM:

How did you come to join Foreigner?

Michael Bluestein:

In 2008 I was at a music convention called NAMM, at an arena in Anaheim. I ran into the keyboard player for Foreigner, a guy named Paul Mirkovich. He was playing keyboards with them as a sort of temporary solution. He told the guys, he'd help out for a bit, and said, "when I leave I'll help you find a replacement." When we ran into each other, a light bulb sort of went off for him, and he said, this guy might be the right replacement. So we got to talking, I was with Enrique Iglesias at the time, but I was open to a change. When this came up, I got to audition for the guys, and that's how it all got started. That was 14 years ago.

ROM:

Did you have to sing as part of the audition?

Michael Bluestein:

Yes, background vocals were a big part of it. Foreigner has some pretty heavy background vocals with a lot of harmony, so yeah, that was definitely a part of it.

ROM:

I know you're an amazing keyboard player, but do you enjoy singing?

Michael Bluestein:

Yeah, most musicians, at some point, discover they can sing to some extent. Even if they didn't start as singers, it becomes part of what we do.



ROM:

How did you weather Covid?

Michael Bluestein:

It was actually a good creative time for me. I did a lot of writing and producing here in the studio. The beauty of technology these days, there's just so many tools available for us. Even for most of us who weren't trained as audio engineers. The technology has gotten to the point where most musicians have a rig, and they record and produce on their own. I got to do a lot of that here in the home studio. My girlfriend and I have a duo called Tina Blue, and we wrote some new tunes, and I did some producing and arranging for us. We recorded a lot, and got into the streaming thing. We figured out the multi-angle camera situation for doing live concerts out of the studio, and getting the audio and video together. That was sort of a fun project that kept us busy.

ROM:

It sounds like you kind of thrived during the isolation period?

Michael Bluestein:

Yeah, for a while it was kind of nice, the isolation part of it. A lot of apprehension about the virus was obviously there. People were freaked out, and for a year or so they didn't know what was going on. They didn't know how transmissible it was or how sick you were going to get? I think there's a lot more perspective about it now. It's becoming more endemic instead of pandemic. It's become something we just have to live with. I've had it. Everyone in the band has had it at this point. The blessing was having all that time to do some creative work. Being in the lab, so to speak, working on new music, geeking out in the studio, so that part of it was fun.





ROM:

What was getting back on stage like?

Michael Bluestein:

Pretty amazing. People were just so psyched. We have a lot of fans who are repeat customers. Some have been to tens of shows, even hundreds in some cases. Everybody was dying to get back out and see live music again after being isolated for so long. You could really feel the excitement for everybody, and for us getting back to what we do.

ROM:

Is there a possibility of new Foreigner music on the horizon?

Michael Bluestein:

It's been a little bit since Foreigner had a new album. There are some new things floating around, and some songs in various degrees of completion that will hopefully be getting out there in the next year or two.

ROM:

Foreigner has so much great music, how do you choose what to play?

Michael Bluestein:

We have quite a list of hits we have to deliver for the fans. We're in the enviable position of having more hit songs than we can do in a set. As far as what people want to hear, those hits come first, but it's hard to get to everything.

ROM:

Considering how long Foreigner has been around, you've somehow still remained one of those must see live acts. How, after 45 years, has the band managed to remain so relevant?

Michael Bluestein:

It's pretty incredible. Songs like Feels Like The First Time, which came out in '77, were built to last. The musical arrangements, and those amazing vocal arrangements, and of course Lou Gramm. They're hit songs that became part of the culture. They've been featured in many movies, and TV shows, and people grew up with them and then raised their kids on Foreigner and classic rock. It's pretty cool to see the kids, the teenagers, the twenty something's, the thirty something's coming to the shows and knowing all the tunes too. Not many bands have the type of music that can stand the test of time the way Foreigner has.



ROM:

It must be amazing to look out in the crowd and see several generations of the same family all enjoying the show together?

Michael Bluestein:

The music being passed down through the generations is the gift that keeps on giving. I do love the fact that it's not just the original audience. That part of it keeps it fresh. Knowing that youthful energy is being passed on, that's invigorating. When you see the youth there and people getting into it who weren't even born when the songs were on the radio. That part of it gives you an injection of adrenaline, and excitement.

ROM:

Does the audience want you to play the songs exactly like the record, or do they like to see a little improvisation?

Michael Bluestein:

We have to pay tribute to, and honor the original parts. For example, we're not going to play "Waiting For A Girl Like You" without me playing the theme synth lead that comes in at the beginning of the song. You're not going to play "Juke Box Hero" without that iconic low bass synth intro you hear when it first starts. You're not going to do Hot Blooded without that opening guitar part. So I think the answer is we have to honor the original parts, and we do. They were there for a reason, and those are the parts the people remember. But yeah, within that framework there's room for some improv, and some dancing around in between the spaces. I'd say we're at 85% to 15% new as far as tweaking things a bit.

ROM:

That must help keep it interesting for the band?

Michael Bluestein:

Yes, definitely. I think over the years we've all found little spots where we can sprinkle in some of our own flavor into the tunes. There are spaces within the arrangements, and some songs that are extended, where there are solos where there weren't any before. The drummer and I have solo spots in the middle of the show, so we can showcase some stuff there too.

ROM:

It sounds like the audience is pretty open minded?

Michael Bluestein:

If what you're playing, the kind of spontaneous things that might happen, if that's coming from the same vibe, and spirit of the song, and adds something without getting in the way then yeah. Also, there are some spirited outtakes from the original performances that didn't make it onto the final track. There were takes that were cut for the sake of the radio, or for the sake of being concise that didn't make it onto the final recording. When you're live and you're extending things, or the chorus goes around another time, or there's a solo space, that may be the time where you can tap into some of those tasty little bits that didn't make the record.

ROM:

Wow, this has been great. Thanks for speaking with me, it's been a lot of fun. Have fun on tour, and we'll see you in Reno.

Michael Bluestein:

Yeah, Thank you too, See you there. With 13 top ten hits between 1977, and 1991, including two #1's, it's little wonder people are still excited when they hear Foreigner is coming to town. With players like Michael Bluestein, singer Kelly Hansen, and the incomparable Mick Jones, the tickets are sure to sell out so get them early. Their show is Saturday, September 24 at 8:00pm at the Grand Sierra Theatre - Grand Sierra Resort, Reno, NV and Rock On Magazine will be there.

Foreigner will be out on tour all summer, be sure to catch them opening for Kid Rock on 14 dates.

www.foreigneronline.com



THERE'S A FIRE IN THE HOUSE:

A CONVERSATION WITH STEVE VAI

BY BILL KOPP

Playing melodically and “shredding” are each in their own way highly valued qualities in music, especially in the genre of hard rock. But those two qualities – crafting an accessible, memorable melody and displaying formidable instrumental pyrotechnics – come together only in the rarest cases. Exhibit A for melodic shredding is the music of Steve Vai. A guitar virtuoso, New York-born Vai has applied his prodigious talents as guitarist, composer, arranger, songwriter, instrument designer and band leader. He has released a dozen solo albums starting with his 1984 debut *Flex-Able* right through his recent work: an archival release and collaboration with old friend Johnny Sambretto, 2023's *Vai/Gash*, and an album of great new music, 2022's *Inviolate*.

Vai's career has also included high-profile examples of him lending his skills to some of the biggest names in rock. He's toured as lead guitarist with Frank Zappa, Alcatrazz, David Lee Roth, Whitesnake and others, and has worked in the studio with everyone from Ozzy Osbourne to Mary J. Blige to Alice Cooper to Spinal Tap. Ahead of a concert tour with lifelong friend and fellow shredder Joe Satriani (see interview in our Sep.-Oct. '22 issue) he spoke with Rock On's Bill Kopp about the relationships between emotion and music, between feel and technique.

Your songs have always been about much more than serving as a sonic canvas for a solo; the music explores a wide variety of emotional textures as well. From where do you draw the emotional content that shows up in your music?

I draw my emotional investment in the music similar to the way anybody else would. You have to enter an emotional state of mind in order for it to authentically flow into whatever you're doing: a melody, an intensity, a groove. The thing that I always focus on is melody.

I love shredding. I love going off into the most obtuse, abstract kind of performance I could muster. And where that comes from is desire: It's an impulse to create, and everybody has that. It's finding the fearlessness to do what you want to do, what your impulses are dictating. And the emotional content is always reflected in the depth of the ability of the music's creator to go into an emotional state of mind.

Those emotions could be positive or negative, right?

Yeah; you can very easily see that in popular music. You know what's on people's minds: sex, heartbreak, all these kinds of things. And that's fine. Many people feel that expressing their pain in their music – their emotional pain, is a cathartic way of dissolving it. But I don't buy that at all. I think that whatever state of mind you enter into, you create more of. So beware how you feel when you're writing and performing. You have to make a choice.

Frankly, I don't have a lot of suffering in my life, so my songs don't reflect that. They reflect other things. I do have challenges, and there's an emotional element to those challenges, and that flows into the music. How you feel should flow into what you're doing, and you are in control. You're the only one in control of the quality of the emotional investment you want to make in your creations. So that's your responsibility. You could do whatever you want, but whatever you do, you're creating more of that for yourself.

So if I go back and play a song that I may have written 40 years ago that has a lot of angst in it, in order for me to perform that song effectively and authentically, I would have to feel angst-ridden. I choose not to do that.

So you just don't perform those songs?

No, I don't perform them. But I don't have many of them. My songs are centered more around silliness, and funny, quirky, loving, very intense joy. There's a desire to create melodies that satisfy, that are fulfilling and satisfying. There's a difference between the feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction and angst. And it's always your choice. So I pull my emotional content from the same place everybody else does: their intentions.



The melodic qualities – the “heart” of your works, if you will – are perfectly balanced with technical brilliance, the “head” part of the music. Does that balance come naturally?

In the field that I function in, my technical abilities on the guitar are not really extraordinary [ed. note: oh yes they are!]. It's what I play, it's how I apply my technique that creates the voice. So I love melody, and I really love phrasing. And the guitar is the best instrument in the world to create phrasing, because the dynamics of it are extraordinary. You can color the sound. You pick it, you bend it, you hit it hard. All these incredible variations: pull-offs, hammers, anything that anybody does, they're all available. And I like using those things in the melody as opposed to just, “Here's a melody.”

Let's take an example: “Call it Sleep” from Flex-Able, because there are a vast amount of dynamics and phrasing in the guitar part. If you listen, there's so much that I love, using to get the melody to speak a certain way: all the articulations, dynamics. These are all part of the tools that you have to shape a melody to make it more effective.

An effective melody has to speak to somebody similar to the way a human voice speaks. When I speak to you, I use inflections, I use space, I use commas, I use periods and exclamation marks and question marks. These are all tools that we use to get our communication across. So the same thing holds true when you're writing a melody. If I didn't use all those things, and I just sat and talked to you like this [speaks in measured monotone] you'd get bored really quick! So I try to apply that to melodies.



The first time I saw you onstage was in October 1981 when you were Frank Zappa's "stunt guitarist." What was the biggest takeaway from playing with him?

Well, you've got to have your shit together. You've got to have good ears. You have to have an adventurous heart. You have to have a good sense of humor. All those things have to be natural to you if you're going to work with Frank.

Frank was brilliant at recognizing your potential better than you could, and then seducing it from you and creating a format [in which] you could express it in an exaggerated way. And then he would use that particular skill that you had as a color in his palette at that time. He would take a snapshot of it, and then move on. He was a true, incredibly powerful creator, and he knew how to "svengali" everybody into place.

So I watched that. And the greatest thing that I extracted from that was: if you want to do something, you just do it. You don't wait for somebody to do it for you. And you don't make excuses. And that was a very powerful lesson, because when I left Frank, it was like, "What do I want to do? Okay, I'm just going to do it: I'm going to make a record, I'm going to release it and I'm going to own and control it and I'm going to make a lot of money. That's what I'm going to do." Because working with Frank, you got that zap of momentum.

You've been friends with Joe Satriani since you were 12, taking guitar lessons from him. All these years later, what's the most fulfilling and enjoyable thing about working on stage with Joe?

It's when he makes me laugh. Because sometimes we have this private kind of inside joke with [musical] notes. It's hard to explain, but Joe has a really good Long Island, New York sense of humor; It's kind of quirky and funny.

So sometimes I see him do things on the guitar when we're playing together. And they're just funny. Sometimes they're funny because they're so extraordinary, and they come from nowhere: "What was that?" And sometimes there's a playful pantomiming, a taking the piss out of something, making fun of something. It's hard to explain, but those are the moments when I giggle so hard!

The G3 Reunion Tour featuring Joe Satriani, Eric Johnson and Steve Vai comes to the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino in Reno NV on Friday, Feb. 2.

www.vai.com



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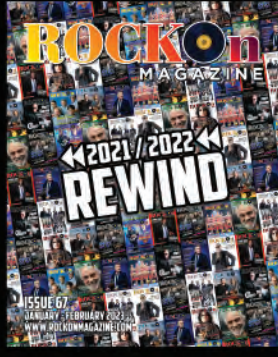
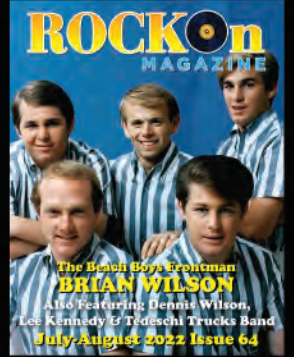
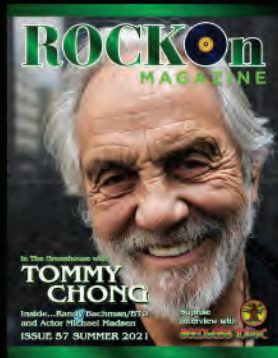
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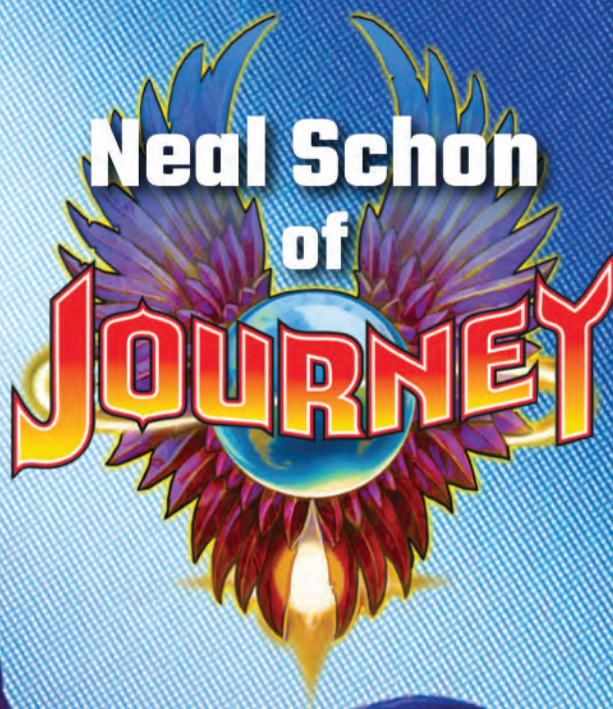
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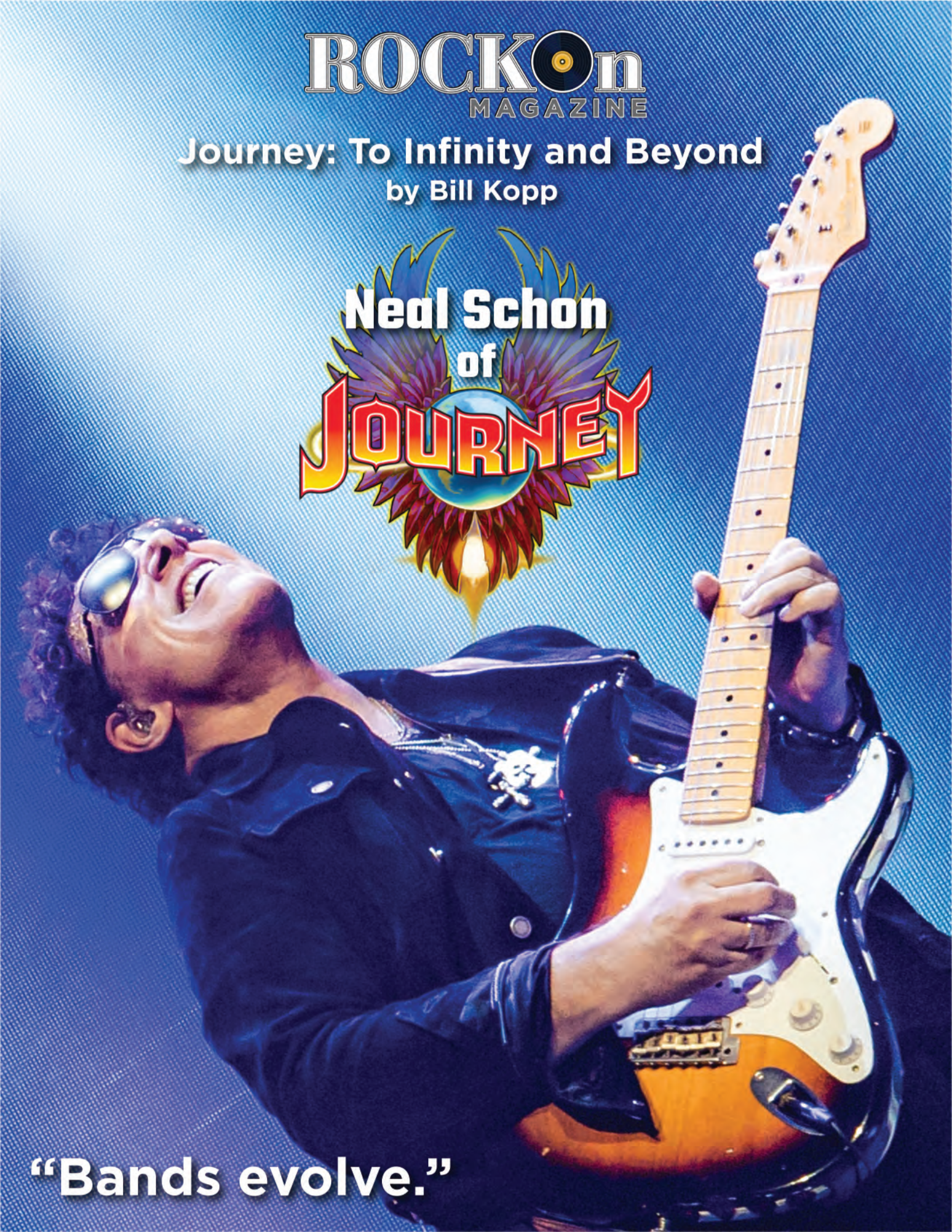
ROCKOn

MAGAZINE

Journey: To Infinity and Beyond
by Bill Kopp



"Bands evolve."



That was Neal Schon's response to the opening question in a recent conversation with Rock On. He was reflecting on the career trajectory of Journey, the multi-platinum selling band he co-founded in San Francisco in 1973.

Between 1978 and 1987, Journey was on top of the pop and rock music world. The band's fourth album, *Infinity* propelled Journey to the top of the charts, and featured a pair of hit singles, "Wheel in the Sky" and "Lights." The latter, a prototypical power ballad co-composed by Perry and Schon, was a slow burn, initially peaking at #68 on the Billboard singles charts. But the tune's popularity grew, pulling the band along with it. Today it's widely considered a classic.

Previous Journey releases sounded quite different from these new songs. And Schon admits that he had reservations about the change when Perry first joined the group. "But when I finally got in a room with him, he and I knocked out our first song it in about 20 minutes," he recalls. "And it was immediate chemistry."

And "Lights" paved the way – or opened the floodgates; choose your metaphor – for future Journey successes. Starting with *Infinity*, the Bay Area rockers entered a high profile arc that saw each of seven successive albums go Platinum – one million units sold – or better. In fact one went double-Platinum, three sold enough to earn the triple Platinum designation. And one, 1981's *Escape*, went Diamond. That's ten million copies sold.

But the Journey of those years bore little resemblance to the group that Schon and four other musicians put together in the early '70s. At its start, Journey was a musical hybrid, a grab-bag of hotshot musicians who had fled other bands in hope of making their mark with something new.

The Journey of those days – as heard on the group's self-titled 1975 debut, 1976's *Look into the Future* and *Next* from 1977 – was a progressive-fusion band. Early Journey showcased the instrumental and compositional prowess of its members, and while keyboardist Greg Rolie was nominally the lead singer, vocals were not a top priority.



Rolie, Schon and bassist Ross Valory provided the instrumental backbone of those days and beyond, with assorted other members coming and going. And by fall 1977, the band had added Steve Perry to its lineup. Then in his late 20s, Perry had a powerful tenor voice. He also brought with him an accessible songwriting style; eight of Infinity's ten songs would feature a Perry co-credit.

With Perry on board, Journey's progressive inclinations were set aside, and largely forgotten. The Steve Perry era defined what would become the group's signature sound. Today Schon acknowledges that "the younger audience is not aware of our earlier records."

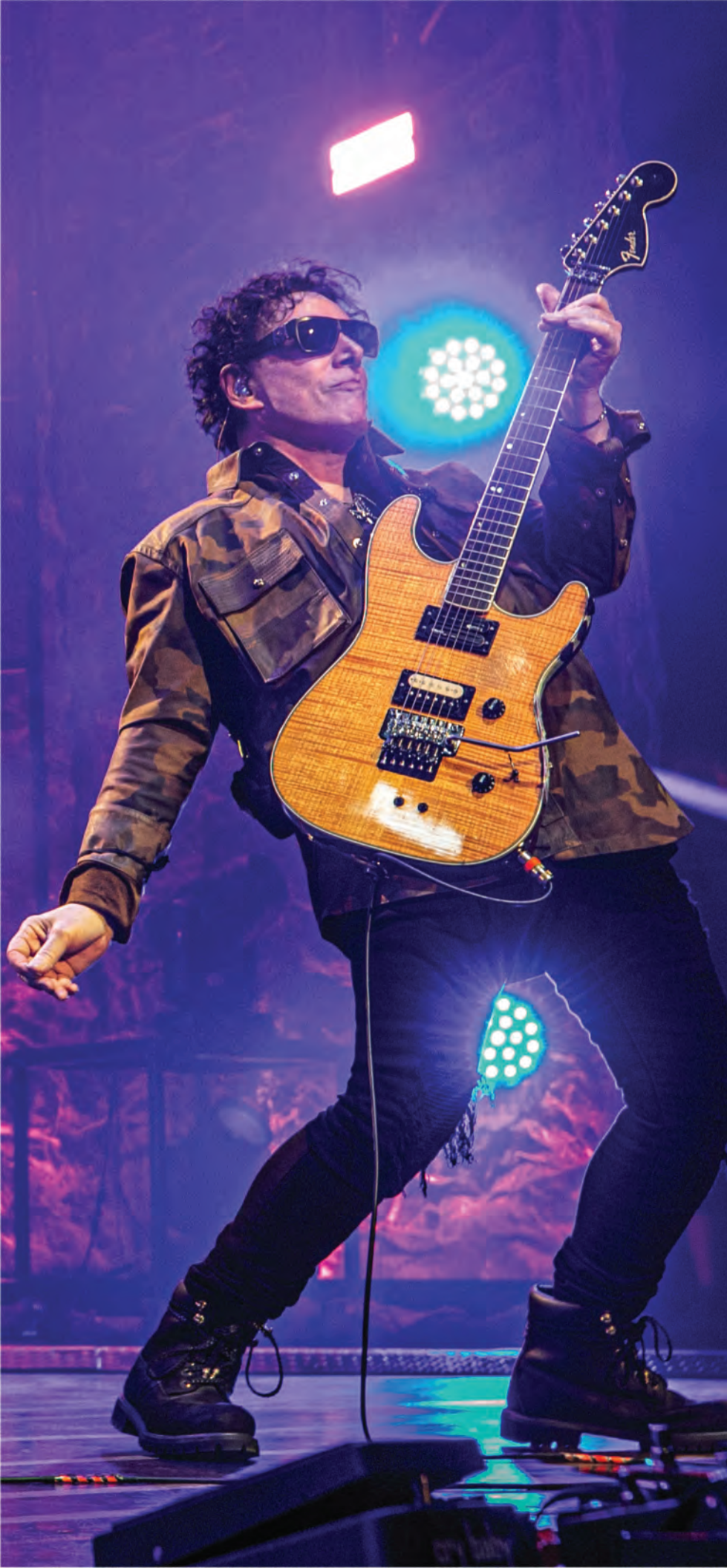
But there would be no denying the appeal of the "new" Journey. And it was on the singles charts where Journey would truly make their mark. After that initial modest success in 1978 with "Lights," the band took off for the outer limits.

A list of Journey singles from that era is sure to bring nods of recognition to anyone with even a passing familiarity with 1980s pop culture. "Lovin', Touchin', Squeezin'" (#15), "Any Way You Want It" (#21), "Who's Cryin' Now" (#3), "Don't Stop Believin'" (#8), "Open Arms" (#1) and "Separate Ways" (#9) are only a sampling of Journey's decade-long dominance on the singles chart.

Neal Schon gives much of the credit for those successes to lead singer Perry, a former drummer. "Steve was a master at manipulating time," Schon says. "He knew how make things sound faster, even though they weren't. I learned a lot from him."

But nothing lasts forever. By the time of 1987's *Raised on Radio*, longtime drummer Steve Smith and founding member Valory had been summarily fired by Perry. Rolie had left by 1980, replaced by Jonathan Cain, formerly of pop group The Babys. Though *Raised on Radio* spawned hit singles, on the whole it was less well-received critically. In the wake of that disappointment, and in the face of changing popular tastes, Journey went on hiatus for nearly eight years.





When the band regrouped, Perry was again its dominant force. But health problems eventually sidelined him. By 1998 Journey's most well-known member announced his exit from the group.

Many bands have folded in the wake of the departure of their lead singer. But Journey – now effectively co-led by Schon and Cain – kept on. The group brought in Steve Augeri, a relative unknown who had worked with Michael Schenker.

Augeri took an active role in songwriting and handled lead vocals on a pair of Journey albums: *Arrival* (2000), 2005's *Generations* and the band's only EP, *Red 13*. None sold in quantities remotely resembling the band's peak '80s period. And vocal problems necessitated Augeri's leaving the group in 2005.

His replacement didn't work out. Schon admires Jeff Scott Soto as a vocalist, but says that ultimately he wasn't a good fit, lacking "the tenor-alto-soprano voice you need to be able to cover the [Journey] catalog."

After Soto's departure, Neal Schon again sought a new lead singer for the band. In February 2008, Philippines-born Arnel Pineda became Journey's sixth lead singer. A powerful vocalist, Pineda helped Journey return to the charts. Self-released in 2008, the aptly-named *Revelation* sold more than one million units.

But that level of success would prove difficult to sustain. Pivoting, the resilient band turned its attention to live work, releasing a string of concert albums and DVDs. Journey would release no new studio material between 2012 and 2021.



Meanwhile, the lineup changes that had been a characteristic of the group's past would return, marked by frequent additions, dismissals and departures. Valory and Smith – both of whom were on hand when Journey was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2017 – were fired in 2020; a flurry of lawsuits ensued. “The cool thing about the name Journey – and the brand Journey – is that the name means you’re always evolving,” Schon says. “It’s okay to make changes.”

The band’s long studio silence was broken with a 2021 album, *Freedom*. And 15 years into his tenure with the group, Pineda remains an effective ringer who can render faithful readings of the classic Journey tunes.

Neal Schon is as compelling and tuneful an axeman as he’s ever been. As Journey’s sole remaining original member, he represents the through-line that ties it all together. “To be frank about it,” Schon says, “it’s my guitar playing. I’ve still got the fire; I’ve still got the chops.”

He’s right. Though they’re subtle, echoes of the prog-fusion era band are in there on *Freedom*, if one listens closely and past the studio sheen. “You never quite leave things behind,” Schon admits.

And he’s looking toward the future. “Everything just keeps on going straight up,” Schon says, passion and determination in his voice. “We keep attaining younger audiences. I’ll look in the front row, and they’re singing every song at the top of their lungs.” Journey seems poised to return to the big time. “We went back into arenas shortly after Lollapalooza this year,” Schon says.

Journey should be celebrating its half-century of music in 2023. That might not happen, and the reason is actually good news. “We already have 2023 and ‘24 planned out,” says Schon. So a 50th anniversary celebration may have to wait a bit. “I think,” says the guitarist with a hearty laugh, “it’s going to take a couple more years.”

And nobody really knows what changes might be in store for Journey between now and then, let alone in the years to follow. It’s all okay, though, because as Neal Schon reminds us, “bands evolve.”

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Get Your Fix On West Street Market's The Fix Serves Creatively Inventive Vegan Faire

By Daena Smith

Walk up to West Street Market, located on the riverwalk in downtown Reno, and the first thing you'll notice are the red brick buildings and the giant square plaza, typically filled with tables and chairs for outside dining during the warmer months. A glass door leads into a spacious, airy indoor dining area, where various food vendors await hungry guests who've come to enjoy a meal. West Street Market is open from Tuesday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Individual vendor times may vary, so please check the website.

From Food Truck to West Street Market

On this chilly but sunny Friday afternoon, Taylor Summer and his team, Jack McGrath and Abbie Stiev, are busting a move at their new location. Customers line up to order their well-known food truck dishes, such as Falacos, a corn tortilla filled with falafel.

Taylor, the team leader, shares that The Fix began as a food truck in April 2016 and transitioned into their current wheelless location in April 2023. His decision to start a food truck in 2016 had to do with the fact he couldn't find enough of a good falafel sandwich. He decided to invest funds into creating a food truck that would provide for himself and others what he desired to eat—tasty, fried balls of spices, herbs, and garbanzo bean flour, known as falafel.

Why The Fix

"We named the food truck 'The Fix' because that's where you go for getting your 'fix' for good food," shares Taylor. Falafel wraps, the now famous Falacos, and, of course, fries were the staples of the food truck for a year until the team branched out into chicken wings. Finding a good vegan substitute for chicken wings is no small feat. The team discovered Lilly's Vegan Pantry and went to town to deep fry the "wings" while adding sauces, such as teriyaki, lemon pepper, and buffalo.

Between 2016 and 2023, Taylor, Jack, and Abbie tested various specials on the truck. The sandwiches and fry combos that they liked to eat and the combination of specials they created over seven years became the menu you see today at their West Street Market.

Tempt Your Tastebuds

A 100% vegan menu made to order with hand-cut fries is quite an excellent feature in a restaurant. Where else can you go in town for food trucks with salty, crunchy, delicious dishes that are good to eat and align with the vision that Taylor, Jack, and Abbie hold for themselves and our planet?

Wraps include the original falafel wrap and are now accompanied by Lilly's Beef and Chicken Shawarma-styled protein substitutes. Lettuce, onion, tomato, cucumber, pickle, and pepperoncini with tahini accompany the wraps.

The Menu

Jack, who has been vegan for fifteen years, has created a favorite of the team's and their customers, The Hornet. Developed from his time at a local pita restaurant, The Hornet has falafel, grilled mushrooms, onions, black olives, pepperoncini, lettuce, and mustard in a wrap. The savory sandwich was his favorite when Jack first started working in restaurants.

Then there are the French fries, which come in multiple combinations on the menu under the Shareables title. Falaco Fries, Bacon Cheez Fries, Loaded Nachos, BBC Fries, and Asada Fries were created to be shared. The Bacon Cheez Fries are those hand-cut fries with chopped bacon and cheese on top. The Loaded Nachos are fresh corn tortilla chips covered in cheese, tahini, aioli, pico de gallo, olives, and jalapenos. The Asada Fries boast steak, pico de gallo, olives, aioli, tahini, and cheese on a bed of those lovely fried potatoes. Talk about yum, crunch, and repeat!

Make sure to try the wings because they are perfect. The Wing Combo is a choice of fries in either regular, garlic, or seaweed—Yes, seaweed; Jack is inventive—with a side of house-made ranch sauce. But it's the choice of wings, which come in 5 different sauces, such as buffalo (GF), teriyaki, BBQ, mango habanero (GF), or lemon pepper (GF), that will catch your taste buds attention and make you want to come back for another fix at The Fix.

A Vision for the Future

Taylor's vision for The Fix, accompanied by Jack's ever-adventurous palate for delicious vegan food, keeps the team focused on plant-based delicacies for the vegan, vegetarian, or omnivore flavor fantasies.

"We use the items that we have and mix them together in multiple combinations to give hungry folks food they want to eat while also aligning our vision of the future with our business," shares Taylor and Jack.

"We're excited to be located at West Street Market. It's a great location, and we can create even more incredible dishes for people now that we're in a static location," shares Taylor.

The team is also part of a punk rock band. If you're in the know, then you know that the punk rock scene supports the welfare of our community, its food choices, and the enormous wealth of delicious plant-based foods located in Reno, NV.

Come down to West Street Market and open the glass door to find The Fix and others just waiting to entice your appetite with good food, good vibes, and down-to-earth people.

ROCKOn

MAGAZINE

“Why Not Us?”

**Train Approaching
30 Years of Pop Rock**

by Bill Kopp





Vocalist and songwriter Pat Monahan formed Train in San Francisco in 1994. The pop-rock band worked hard to develop its sound and cultivate its Bay Area fan base for a few years, eventually signing with Columbia. That major label then reissued the band's self-titled debut, originally recorded on a shoestring budget and marketed independently by the band.

By 1999, the group caught fire with a national audience, and that momentum has sustained through the years. To date, Train has landed more than a dozen of its singles on Billboard's "Hot 100" charts, and the group has scored three prestigious Grammy Awards, two Billboard Music Awards and an ASCAP Pop Music Award. Train has even broken through to the country music audience: in 2011 the band received a nomination for "Performance of the Year" at the CMT Music Awards.

While Monahan is the sole founding member still with the band today, the current lineup has been remarkably stable: bassist Hector Maldonado, multi-instrumentalist Jerry Becker and vocalists Nikita Houston and Sakai Smith have all been with the group since 2009. Drummer Matt Musty joined in 2019, and guitarist Taylor Locke came on board nearly two years ago.

As Monahan explained to Rock On in a recent conversation a few weeks before the kickoff of a nearly three-month run of dates, Train's original plans for this year didn't include a tour at all. But the band's ardent fan base demanded it. The band's 11th studio album, *AM Gold* was released in early 2022, and this tour will give the band an opportunity to bring the songs from that well-received album to the stage, along with fan favorites from across the group's nearly 25-year history.

Train's music has explored a number of different styles. You explored a country vibe on "Angel in Blue Jeans," and leaned in an acoustic direction with "Marry Me" and "Hey, Soul Sister." There's an orchestra backing the band up on "Drops of Jupiter." You even did an album of Led Zeppelin songs. With *AM Gold*, you're showcasing another dimension of the band's character, a modern take on classic pop. Is that eclectic approach a product of your wide influences, musical restlessness, or something else?

Musical restlessness is probably a pretty good way to put it! I love so many different types of music that thinking about being in one lane doesn't seem nearly as fun. It'll still be my voice and words and melodies, but maybe with different instrumentation and a different take on it. When we were writing the AM Gold album, my manager, Jonathan [Daniel] recognized the style that we were writing in; he said, "This sounds like an 'AM gold' album!" I was like, "I don't even know if I know what that is." But then I explored it, and that sounded right to me.

So you weren't setting out to write songs in a particular style?

Right; the [initial songs] came out that way. And then once I recognized what the style was, we were able to continue down that road and finish the album.

Does having such a widescreen approach to a musical style make it difficult or frustrating for your record company to market you?

At this point in my career, I don't think there's much of a marketing plan. People who like Train as something they listen to: those are the people that we're marketing to. It's less of a marketing plan and more of, "How do we get this heard?"

There's an old saying that it takes years to become an overnight sensation. Train was together for five or six years before you broke through, producing and initially releasing your first album independently. Were there ever times in those early years when you were tempted to give it up and move on?

There weren't give-up moments. I didn't have another opportunity. I was painting houses in the Bay Area, and painting houses was not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I did enjoy it, but it didn't seem like it was something I would be able to continue with and not feel terrible about [missing] an opportunity that I might have been given by whatever the spirit world is. The frustrations were really difficult to bear through, but when you don't have a choice, then you figure out how to get through it.



In those early days, did you have a vision of where you wanted the band to go?

I did interviews [back then] and told writers, "We will probably never be the biggest band in the world, but we will outlive all of them!" Even in the early days, it wasn't bragging; it's just that I have a desire to learn. I listen to a lot of young artists that people probably haven't heard of, and I'm getting a lot out of it all the time. So my desire to continue — to progress and try to tap into different things and even in myself — creates longevity.

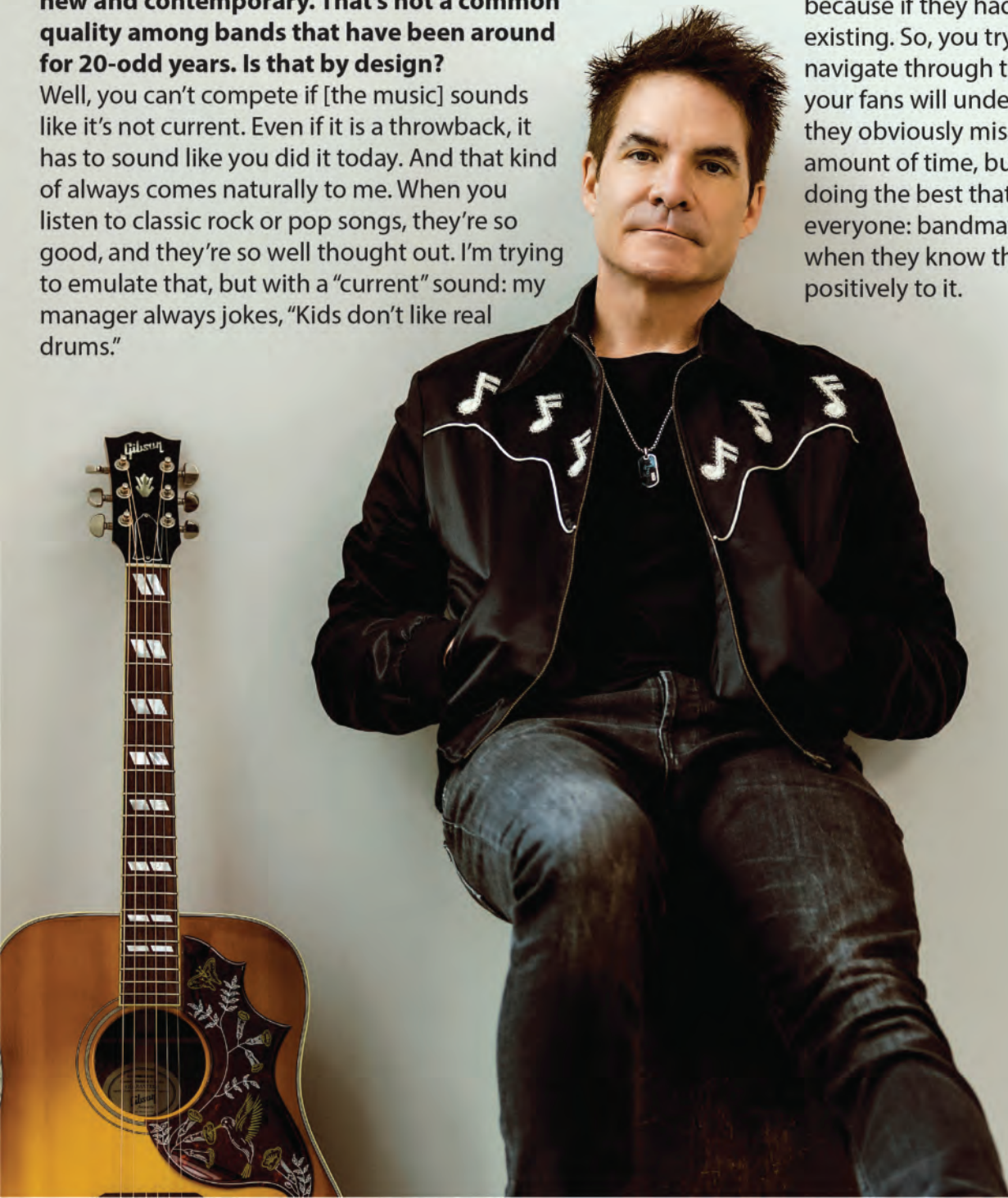
Not only does AM Gold have that kind of early '70s kind of pop feel, but it also feels very new and contemporary. That's not a common quality among bands that have been around for 20-odd years. Is that by design?

Well, you can't compete if [the music] sounds like it's not current. Even if it is a throwback, it has to sound like you did it today. And that kind of always comes naturally to me. When you listen to classic rock or pop songs, they're so good, and they're so well thought out. I'm trying to emulate that, but with a "current" sound: my manager always jokes, "Kids don't like real drums."

While the band's lineup has gone through some changes over the years, more often than not, Train has featured six or more members. What are the advantages of that?

There are times where we do shows without [Nikita and Sakai] in the band, but they add such a good vibe, and we're like family. I like to have them around, because they're great at what they do, and they bring such a beautiful energy to what Train is.

And the lineup through the years has changed due to reasons that are not really in people's control. Some people leave because they need to, and some people had to leave because if they hadn't, Train would stop existing. So, you try to figure out how to navigate through time, and you hope that your fans will understand. And they have; they obviously miss people for a short amount of time, but they realize that I am doing the best that I can to take care of everyone: bandmates and Train fans. And when they know that, I think they respond positively to it.



Train has had so many hit singles to its credit that you could easily populate an entire concert setlist with nothing but hit singles. What's your favorite overlooked or deep-cut Train song, and do you ever play it live?

There's a song called "Give It All" that was on [2017's] *A Girl, a Bottle, a Boat*, and we hadn't played that one in a long time. When we tour this summer, I definitely want to play songs that people have not ever heard live. I was talking to a woman who has been to many many Train shows, and she asked, "Do you ever get tired of playing the hits?" And the answer is no, because people respond so positively to them.

There's a song called "Running Back" on *AM Gold* and that's one of my favorite songs ever written. So we're going to start playing songs in these sets that we love, and hopefully people will respond the same way as [they do to] "Hey, Soul Sister."

When you play some of the band's earliest material, do you recognize the guy who wrote those songs?

There were times in the early days when I was really sad, and there are fans of Train that are like, "I kind of like the sad Pat." You like the music of sad Pat, but I don't want to be that guy any more; I don't want to live like that. But I think there were moments that I needed to be that guy so that I could write those songs. And those songs were part of the process of getting out of that [emotional place]. What a gift to be given to be able to work through things through music!



How do you think Bay Area roots show up in the band's character?

San Francisco during the time of us coming up was the perfect city to be able to create not just music but a fan base, because there were so many venues to play. You didn't have pay-to-play like in Los Angeles. At times you were paid, and at times you weren't. But it was okay; it was a good trade [even when you didn't get paid], because you were creating [a fan base] that cared.

And there's no other place we could have done that but San Francisco. The beauty and the culture and difficulty of living there: all of those things played a role in the music that was written.



What are you most looking forward to about this upcoming tour?

We were only going to do ten shows this summer, and then I was going to write an album; we were going to tour amphitheaters next year. But we put the ten shows up, and they sold out. Then we put ten more up, and they're selling out. So we just figured, "Let's do a run of all the places that we don't go to very often." I don't remember the last time we were in Wyoming, but we're going to go. And we're going to play to a sold-out amphitheater; that's pretty cool! So what I'm looking forward to is seeing all of these places that I haven't seen in so many years, because those are my people. I was raised in Erie, Pennsylvania, and to think of my favorite band coming there when I was a kid, that sounds like a lot of fun. You get a whole different energy.

You mentioned that you predicted long ago that Train would outlast other bands. When you started the band nearly 30 years ago, did you ever imagine that you'd still be doing it in 2023?

Yeah! I mean, look at Tony Bennett. So why not me? When I golf and somebody's trying to make a 30-foot putt, that's something we say: "Why not you?" And this is similar; it's a simplified version of it: "Why not us? Why can't we keep going like Tony Bennett?" It's a different era, but it's the same concept.

Postscript: Train released a brand new single in late June. "I Know" features the group joined by two guests: two-time JUNO Award winner Tenille Townes and multi-platinum rapper/singer Bryce Vine. "I Know" is the first new music from Train since the release of their 11th studio album, AM Gold, in May 2022.

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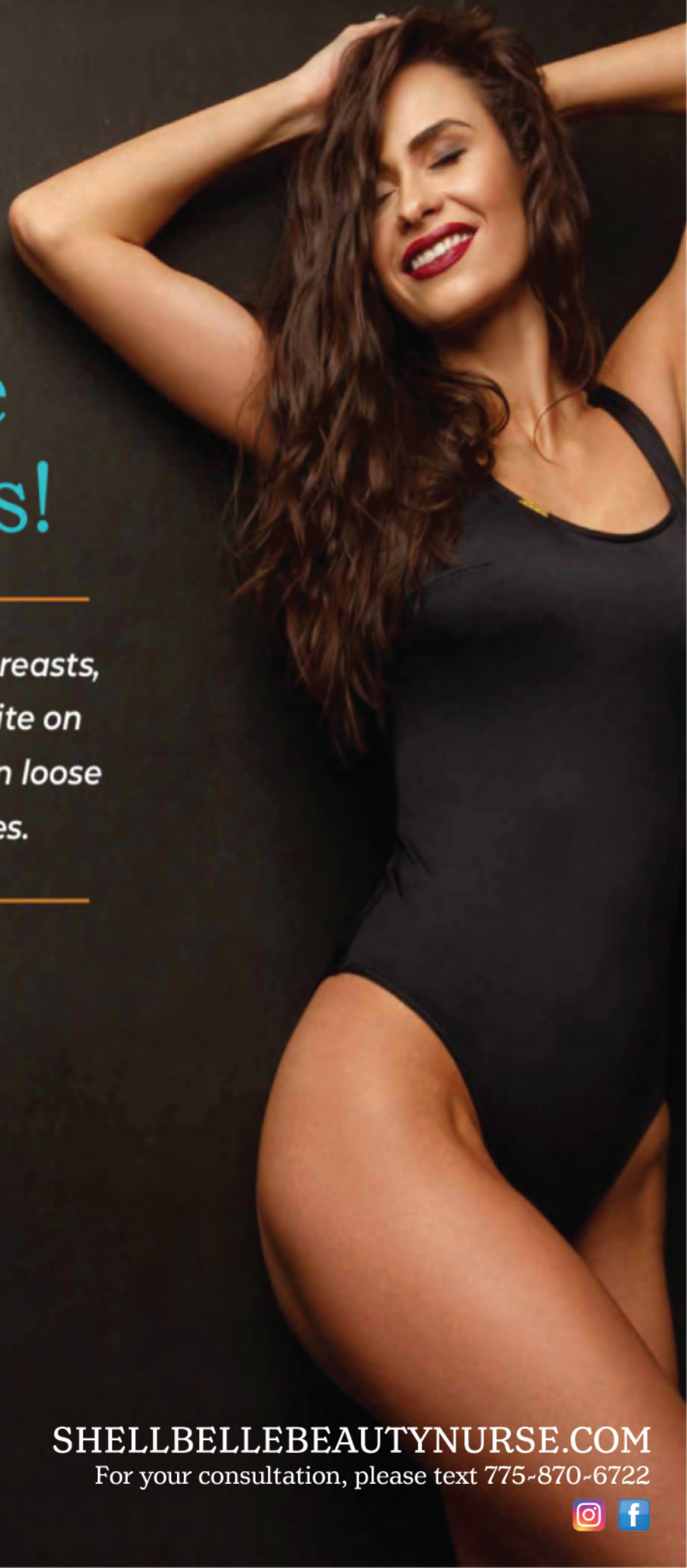
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January 19th Jake Jacobson and his band, Fundraiser for Miss

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January 26th Stephen Lord Music 7:00-10:00 PM

February 2nd Old Flames New Wicks Band 7:00-10:05 PM

February 9th Jason Perl Music 7:00-10:05 PM

February 15th Shopping & Drinks 6:00-9:00 PM

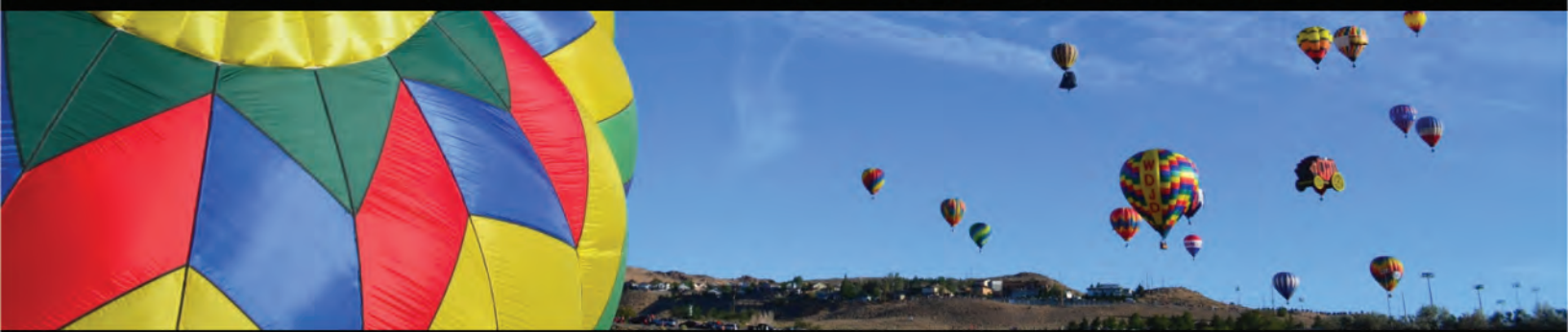
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ROCKON n MAGAZINE

"BANDS EVOLVE" "IT'S OKAY TO MAKE CHANGES" NEAL SCHON, JOURNEY

"So, I was the only one doing the narrative," he laughs.

Which made me seem like I was particularly crazy at the time."

Billy Corgan,
SMASHING
PUMPKINS

"At least people would get to know me first." "And that's the best way to start a relationship - my fans and the ones I love included." Ayron Jones

"I worked my patootie off that summer, and when they had another audition, I was there again!" Danielle Betscher, ROCKETTES

"Yeah, most musicians, at some point, discover they can sing to some extent." "Even if they didn't start out as singers, it becomes part of what we do." Michael Bluestein, FOREIGNER

"The positive is in every person." "The only time positive is not there is when you're not yourself." Julian Marley

"From Bombay to Paris and New York to San Diego, "You can instantly tell your story." Joe Satriani

"Yeah, you know, when I hear that, I cringe just a little bit, because I never felt like the greatest of all time."

Jerry Rice on being The Goat

"We will never be the biggest band in the world, but we will outlive them all." - Pat Monahan, TRAIN

"The (1986 AFC Championship game) drive in Cleveland was a monumental game in my career." John Elway

"Screw it, I'll do something else." Dave Mason

"A song can be whatever you need it to be" Brent Smith -SHINEDOWN

"We aren't a critically acclaimed band and never have been." "At this point, I think we've all accepted our fate." Tyler Connolly, THEORY OF A DEAD MAN

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