

FINAL Timmy Cappello Interview 5/29/24

VC: Hello, I'm Vanessa Corwin

KK: And, I'm Kathleen Kaan

VC: Multi-instrumentalist Timmy Cappello has played with some heavy hitters-Tina Turner, Peter Gabriel, Ringo Starr, Carly Simon, among others, and currently has a solo act resulting from his role in the 1987 film, The Lost Boys. We caught up with Timmy as he prepares for upcoming gigs in Tampa, Florida and the New York/New Jersey Metro area. Timmy, welcome to the podcast, thanks for joining us.

TC: Thanks for having me. This is exciting.

VC: Now you played sax with Tina Turner for, was it 16 years?

TC: Fifteen years. From 1984 to 1999.

VC: Wow, so what was that like? Touring the world, with Tina Turner!

TC: Yes. Well, I had played with a lot of pretty famous singers before that but I definitely didn't know what I was getting myself into with Tina, because she is just different than any other person that I've ever played with. She is, got her stuff together so well and she is not a fading flower. She is gonna tell you exactly what she thinks and she is gonna tell you what you need to do to come up to her level. I would have to say, that I learned more from her than anybody that I ever paid to teach me about music. She taught me how to make music into emotion. It wasn't just notes on a page. It wasn't just getting something correct. It was all about the emotion. If you want people to feel this, you've gotta show emotion. And that's what I learned most from her.

KK: You know, that's amazing what you just said because it took me a long time to learn that as a singer. Perfection doesn't count, it is the emotion and how you relate to an audience. Now I'm sure you're not just known for playing the song I Still Believe. And that's from the 1987 vampire film, The Lost Boys. Tell us about, I was reading that Joel Schumacher had something to do with you getting that role. I'm fascinated.

TC: I'm gonna tell you a little story that is actually kind of freaky. I know that everybody has been in a situation where they're getting where they're going and there's a song on the radio and you can't leave your car till you find out who does that song. What's the name of the song. So, I'm waiting at the Warner Brothers studio lot and I can't leave the car. But I was there auditioning for the Gary Busey part in Lethal Weapon (VC: Oh wow). So yeah, you know, I was late. I didn't make it in time. Everybody was gone. I could have done it. But at any rate I was a little disappointed. But as I'm sitting there chewing the fat with a lot of the people that were there auditioning a guy that I just never met before comes across my view, stops and says, "you play with Tina Turner, don't you?" And I said, yes, I do. And he said, "come with me." He walked me down the hall, knocked on the door. Sitting behind this desk was Joel Schumacher, the director of The Lost Boys. He says to me, "Timmy, what the hell is going on? I've been trying to get in touch with you for two weeks. Do you have a phone, do you have an agent, what the heck is going on?" I said Well, I've been on the road. I just came

in to do this audition, but I spend most of my time on the road. I'm lucky that Tina would let me slip away to try and do some more stuff. So, he said, "would you like to do a song in my latest movie?" And I had of course known his, you know, Car Wash... (KK: He's amazing) I had known his stuff. I loved him. And I said man, you bet your ass I wanna do this. I'm dying to do it. Now the interesting thing was that I was the second person that they chose. The first that they chose was a group named The Call, who had done this specific song that I was in the parking lot listening to. So, it turned out that he gave me the exact song (KK: That's crazy) for the audition.

VC: That was karma.

KK: More than karma!

TC: Karma with a capital K. That was so amazing. He had wanted The Call to do it first, but The Call was a Christian band. So, they didn't want to have anything to do with any vampires. (laughter). So, they said, no thank you. So, I said yes, thank you, I'll definitely do this because I just thought he was the greatest. You know, Joel Scumacher got his start in Andy Warhol's Factory (KK: wow) (VC: Oh, did he?). He was the hippest of the hip. I just thought he was fantastic. So, I said, you bet your ass, man, I am in. So, he sends me the tape, and it's the exact same song that made me late for the audition. (VC: Wow) I just thought to myself okay, I gotta do this.

VC: And it was a good thing that you did.

TC: Can you imagine, two hours is all that it took and you know how everything, you guys are filmmakers. You understand that it always takes about ten to twelve more times than you think it's going to, right? Very rarely do things just go, one right after the other. Not this. It only took two hours to cut that entire scene. (VC wow). Because we were just there. Everybody in the Santa Cruz area, they were at that place on the beach every night. We didn't need any extras.

VC: Yeah, I mean, talk about karma with a capital K!

TC: Right? It still blows my mind.

VC: You have appeared with Tina Turner and so many other bands, Ringo Starr, Peter Gabriel, etc., what were those experiences like for you and do you have a favorite among them?

TC: My very first job at age 18 was playing piano and saxophone with the comedian Billy Crystal. (KK: Oh, my goodness!) (VC: Wow). We met in a club. He said, would you come and just play a little bit for me? Well, that lasted for five years (KK: Oh, my goodness). So, all I'm saying to you guys is can you imagine being in a car with Billy Crystal driving from New York to Niagara Falls and he's got you under the seat. (VC: Laughter) That was one of my very, very favorite experiences.

KK: You must have some sort of an angel that's behind you in this business because it doesn't happen like that, mostly. That's amazing.

TC: You know what? I am the luckiest dude in the universe.

KK: I'm hearing, these days, you're touring the country playing clubs (TC: Yes), you're known as the sexy sax man—ya gotta tell me where that came from—Is this a result of the film, or more? Did you ever think that this movie would have such a cult following?

TC: Absolutely not. The film didn't mean anything for my career. But then Saturday Night Live did a parody of me with Jon Hamm playing me. And once I was their grandfathers' age... my audience is in their early 30's to 40's.

KK: Are these a cult following you? I mean the Rocky Horror Show, everybody goes because they know it.

TC: That's exactly what it is. I look out and I see, there's a lot of words to that song, I see all these kids who weren't even born when I did this, singing every note, singing every word, dancing around like crazy. I tell you what. Talk about luck. I'm just the luckiest guy in the solar system.

VC: Now do you think social media had anything to do with this?

TC: You know, it's interesting that you say that, Vanessa, because some people have told me that. Some people have said, it's when you got yourself on social media that it started to snowball, I guess I have to believe that. Your guess is as good as mine. All I know is that I'm filling up clubs everywhere I go, and with young people.

KK: It's amazing. I hear, everything I read about you, you truly are a one-man band. You play keyboards, you play drums, forget it, OK. You don't have an agent, you don't have a rep. How do you get the gigs?

TC: I have a website that helps me find all of the clubs. And because a lot of people have heard of me, I just basically say this is me, put some pictures up, a little demo, five-minute demo of my show and so I just email out. Say I want to go to St. Louis. I'll just email every club in St. Louis that looks like it might be a good fit for me. I'll email 20 people and five or six will write back.

VC: That's great, wow. That website sounds like a great resource for you.

TC: It's fantastic. I might just as well tell all the other musicians out there that if they're looking for ways to connect with club owners, college people, who are having shows at a college, it's called indieonthemove. It gives you the email address, it gives you the phone number of everybody that's a booker in the whole country. Somebody told me about it so I want to pass this on to people, because it is a gift from heaven. Yeah.

VC: Fantastic. That is a terrific resource. Now to get to your gigs you drive everywhere. You're the road warrior, man, you're like... so tell us about life on the road. What is that like for you? I would imagine it requires a lot of discipline and focus, so talk about that.

TC: It requires a tremendous amount of guilt. You've got to get your workouts in every day, I'm gonna take myself to the Walmart parking lot and practice my sax, practice my voice, and then I'm gonna go to the Planet Fitness, get a good workout, check into the hotel, go right... set up... it's a discipline that I do that if you don't keep on it, you're dead in the water. If you let one day when you don't shave, say, you know you're headed down the wrong path. You've gotta keep yourself totally focused.

VC: Indeed. And do you also, I read somewhere, you kind of bring your own food with you? Do you do that still?

TC: Yes, I do. Well, they always have microwaves and fridges so I make sure that I've got that. And quite frankly, there are a lot of these frozen dinners that are extremely healthy. So, I do that, and maybe I'll go to someplace that's healthy, like Panera Bread, that's a great example. They have lots of good... even Dunkin Donuts, they have avocado toast, so I look at all of the fast-food joints and I look them up on line and I see who's got the best soup, and that's the way I do it.

VC: A lot of research. Lot of research going on there.

TC: You know, when you're riding in a car, seven hours, you've got tons of time to do the research.

KK: Now when you get to the gig, now do you conventions also?

TC: Yes, that's what started me on this.

KK: And when you're there, what kind of music do you perform? (VC: Like in the clubs?) Aside from the famous one, do you do covers or your own originals?

TC: Well, I do both, it all depends. I'll ask them, do you want me to play? If you want me to play, do you want me to play the song from The Lost Boys or do you want a full hour and a half show? So, they'll pay me a certain amount of money either to do I Still Believe from The Lost Boys or to play my whole show.

KK: Tell me about your whole show, what is that?

VC: Yes, tell us about your show and also, do you do different set lists for every show or do you pretty much do the same, like when you go to a club?

TC: Right now, because of Covid, that sort of put a crimp in things for a little while. But once that was over then I was ready to get started again. So yes, I do it with theater software. It keeps the movies running, so by pressing one little button with my foot I can get myself through the show. And at the moment I'm making a new show. (VC: aha). I am making a new record, I'm making films, because let's face it. If you're just a one-man band the worst thing that could ever happen is that you're gonna do karaoke (VC/KK: Laughter, KK: I personally detest...) You have to make it entertaining for the... tell stories from my checkered past, and make people enjoy it all. They seem to like the little stories about playing with this person and that person, what's

Ringo Starr really like, or what's Tina really like, so I'm doing that and I have been, because of Covid, I pretty much have been just doing my one show. But I'm about  $\frac{3}{4}$  done with my new show. And then once that's done then I could do my brand-new show until that starts to become a little bit long in the tooth, right? (VC/KK: Laughter, yeah) Then after that's done, I will have two complete shows and I can ask people from the stage, OK, which one do you want to hear?

VC: So, you could take requests, in other words?

TC: I can take requests. I can give them anything they want and to me I think that is gonna be the way that, you know, that's what I'll do. New movies, everything will be up there. Face it, if you're a one man show you have to keep things going.

KK: You did your first album, Blood on the Reed? (TC: Yes) What year was that, (VC 2018?)

TC: No, it was 2021, I think. (VC: Oh)

KK: Are you working on any new music, are you thinking about doing another solo album?

TC: Oh, yeah. The thing is these albums and films are really labors of love because I play every single note and sing every single note on the album. My sister and I have a good vocal blend so she and I will get together and do the background vocals. Other than that, I'm playing drums, I'm playing bass, I'm playing guitar, I'm playing piano. All these things to me it's the most personal that I could get.

KK: Are these all-original songs on the albums?

TC: I only usually do about two original songs in each set. I want to, as I said, entertain people. I want people to have songs where I take a song and twist it around. Like in other words if you remember the old song by Screamin' Jay Hawkins, I Put a Spell on You (VC: Oh, yeah) Yeah. So, I take that song which is originally a ballad and I turn it into a party song. (VC: All right!) I like for people to know what they're listening to So I will say, would you guys' mind if I did an original song. And usually, they're really into it. I'll do it.

VC: So, it's a combination of familiar stuff and some new stuff, some of your stuff. So that's great. Do you envision any collaborations going forward with other musicians?

TC: Well, there is, Corey Feldman calls me a lot to see if we could do some albums together and also G. Tom Mac who wrote the song Cry Little Sister from The Lost Boys. So, we collaborate, but I have to say I think I'm kind of a megalomaniac. (laughter) I want that control and I want every note to be what comes out of the heart.

VC: Got it. OK, so you're working on a new album. What about other projects, like movies? Any new movies?

TC: I just finished a movie. There's a good friend of mine... I live in Columbia; South Carolina and he was one of my first friends from Columbia. He persuaded me to live there, he said it's really a fun place, it's a very artistic place. Everybody is doing something. So, he's doing a horror movie and I play in the band in the movie because it's kind of like a Manson-esque... so it's going to be very interesting. And then I play—he really wanted me to be in it—So I play a talk show host, not unlike yourselves (laughter), right? I play a talk show host, so it's more like, about the paranormal.

VC: Ooh, well you've gotta keep us posted on that. We definitely want to see that.

TC: I'm so excited about it because I've done a bunch of TV shows and movies, I did Miami Vice, I did the Equalizer twice, I did a couple of things for Netflix, I did Reservation Dogs, and I'm always on TV. I don't know if you ever heard of the AXS Channel. A-X-S.

VC: Yes, yes.

TC: And so, I do a show called The Top Ten Revealed. What they do is they say, people who are sort of experts at certain kinds of music, they will ask you questions about that. A really smart person once said to me, he said, "always say yes."

VC: And that is absolutely right, Timmy.

TC: You understand what I'm saying, right?

VC: Absolutely. Couldn't agree more. Always say yes, yes. You gotta plunge in and you know like the old Nike commercial, just do it, you know? (TC: That's exactly right). Could not agree more.

KK: Let me ask you. You're so positive and so wonderful and you gave already, musicians, insights, some special insights when they're starting out. What is the most challenging part of all this for you?

TC: OK, my answer to that is really something that I always say. I would do the show for free. I would do the table, the merch table, for free. I would do everything for free except for driving, setting up my equipment and then after a long, long night, packing up my equipment, getting back to the hotel at 3:30 in the morning. (KK: You're bringing back memories!) That's the part where I feel I'm making my money. It's difficult to do and I'm no spring chicken, that's for sure. So, I put everything I have into that. OK, this is how I make my money and everything else is just a joy and a blessing and I can't even tell you how much. Doing this show is the greatest thing that ever happened.

VC: So that's your greatest reward is doing the show in front of an audience, yes?

TC: That's exactly right. Man, I tell you what. Because I've always been somebody else's second banana, you know, playing for Peter Gabriel, Eric Carmen, Carly Simon, all these different people, now, I'm my own banana and when I finish a song and people are going so crazy that I literally am backing up, that's how loud...

that to me, I just can't describe the joy of that It's the best thing that I've ever done in my life, and I don't know how it happened. It just fell onto me. All of a sudden, the phone just started ringing, "hey, would you play our club?" and, "would you play our convention?" and, "would you play our college?" How do you get so lucky?

VC: So now you've got this great thing going on for yourself. So, what advice would you give to musicians who are starting out, starting out in their careers?

TC: You know the thing I said to you, always say yes? And just don't ever stop, because eventually that wild, out of nowhere break is gonna come someday, and if you're not ready for it then you've just blown all that work. That's the way I feel about it, like I said, at 10:00 in the morning, if I play till 3:00 in the morning, I am at the Home Depot parking lot. I want to keep myself ready for whatever has to do with anything because I understand it could all be taken away in a second. Just ride it while you've got it.

KK: And where are we going to find you, tell everyone who's listening? What's your tour schedule, what's going on?

TC: Just Google Tim Cappello, T-I-M C-A-P-P-E-L-L-O on Facebook. I have all of my gigs listed, when they are, where they are, the clubs.

VC: Timmy's next gigs: He's got upcoming gigs in Tampa Saturday, June 1 at Hooch & Hive, and in the New York/New Jersey metro area Friday June 14th at TV Eye, in Ridgewood Queens, that's TV like television and Eye, like the body part, in Ridgewood, Queens, and Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at QXTs in Newark, New Jersey. So, people in those locations, check out those venues for tickets.

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