



Napa Music Industry: Welcome Back & The Middleman Complex

Commentary By Dalton J. Piercey 03-9-21



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I have spent my pandemic time mostly in a sort of comedy or deep thought of the troubles of our times. My soon to be published albums of songs, twenty to be exact, have kept me focused and busy. All that combined with the political grist mill of superstition and political fantasies resulted in my artistic mindset taking refuge in my art. I hope I was not the only one yelling at the TV on January sixth, give them the bayonet as they did with us back in the sixties protest era. Hi, my name is Dalton and I am still here. The reason I step forward to speak out now is two fold. Earlier a musician known to us all had passed away.

Additionally with the County's recent decision to look at upgrading law and regs so that Micro Wineries can improve their economic outlook for the future.

As stated, a musician acquaintance for some of us and friend to others. Passed in a nursing home a place found to be his only refuge. For he was homeless, this is a movie played out in Napa as I have seen over and over again in my time. I am offended.

So divorcing my anonymity I speak out frankly and clearly to say that Napa County and City governments have a serious Middle Man Complex. In the music business the middle man complex is the act of placing ones self in the middle of the music business being conducted and controlling the opportunity and the economics to the middle man's benefit. I say look who is benefitting?

For example, the city's Outdoor Amplified Music Permit which was free at one point is now once again carrying a monetary cost. So good bye to the opportunity to perform a backyard barbecue and derive some income for local musicians. The cost for Music Entertainment Permitting has returned as well, given to the planning department which appears to have a different priority and agenda other than music entertainment. Given the many costs to have entertainment in your establishment, no wonder there is a cost reluctance on the part of local businessmen to have music.

And as well there is California AB 5 still floating around out there not fully resolved for musicians.I speculate that events such as Bottlerock, Porchfest and the Oxbow Concerts (when they commence again), along with the four venue spots that we have in Napa, are the granted substitutions by the city for what appears to look like a music industry at least in their vision. However when we look at these opportunities to perform local live music, there is very little economic opportunity, mostly a barrel full of what we musicians call free gigs.

Napa City Nights is one exception in that musician's facilitate the event and in common with our creed they know and have concern to their best ability that musicians get paid. Many of you may not know this, I am the founder of the music in Veterans Park, and Napa City Nights has carried and improved upon that vision.

But here we are, I carried the message to the City Council and published here in the register that we should have Music Industry language in the General Plan and the Downtown Specific plan. Our City Manager spoke up for me with the Planning Department. I was invited to one zoom event which had nothing to do with music industry and because I was not speaking to the subject at hand, so I was muted. My effort was to address the city on the fact that there exists language for visual art in the cities plans and nothing specific for music industry. That looks like and speaks in the form of professional music language.

For sometime now I have suggested to County Supervisor Wagenknecht and others that the County allow music permitting to Tasting Rooms to have small music combos, duo's and solo's inside the tasting room. With attendance based on the rooms small capacities. This will expand the economic opportunity for musicians in the county. Supervisor Wagenknecht has always fathomed up the AG Preserve and not wanting to open it. Okay, so now he is looking to explore new law for micro winery's. Why not for what I suggest as well?

I was the Music Coordinator for the Calistoga Chamber for three years. I was blessed with meeting some of our wonderful Wine Makers, truly interesting generous individuals. They accepted my idea's for music. But I ask myself, how does that desire keep changing coats and conforming to blind industrial expansionism benefitting one group?

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