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Aces high

Rock band made up of current and former air traffic controllers taking off

By: **Eva Wasney**

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Aviation has served as inspiration for many hit songs, but the subject is a little too on the nose for the members of CAR287, a Winnipeg rock band founded by current and former air traffic controllers.

CONCERT PREVIEW

CAR287

- Trans Canada Brewing, 1290 Kenaston Blvd.
 - Tuesday, Oct. 28, 6-9 p.m.
- Tickets \$60 (includes dinner and one drink) at rescuefood.ca

"It's more personal life and those kinds of experiences that have found their way into our songs. Thus far, anyway. Maybe once I'm retired, I'll dive into that topic," lead vocalist Jay Yarmey says.

Still, the high-flying connections run deep for CAR287.

Yarmey and bandmates Travis Wog (guitar) and Terry Ferguson (bass) met through Winnipeg's area control centre, where all of Manitoba's airspace is managed. Drummer Ryan Olenick is married to a Nav Canada simulation trainer and newly recruited keyboardist Robert Holter-Ferguson (Ferguson's son) trained in air traffic control before pursuing a different career path.

The amateur musicians started playing together in various forms more than a decade ago for the NavCan Jam, an annual industry fundraiser organized by Ferguson.

"I was in air traffic services for many years and I noticed there were an awful lot of really good musicians (on staff)," says the retired control centre manager and longtime local cover-band player, who also moonlights as an actor in local filmmaker Tyrone Deise's Simpsons-inspired shorts.

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From left: CAR287 members Ryan Olenick, Travis Wog, Jay Yarmey, Terry Ferguson and Robert Holter-Ferguson are soaring.

Music is a surprisingly common niche within the global aviation community as well. CAR287 — a nod to the address of the band's practice space and not job jargon — has twice performed at an international festival for air traffic control bands (yes, that's a thing).

The Controllers' Music Festival, a.k.a. ComuFest, is a multi-day event held every few years in different European locales. The 2024 edition featured 20

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Ferguson believes the common interest has something to do with the psychological makeup of those in the field and the decisiveness required for the job.

“When you’re onstage and you’re playing music, you can’t just stop if you mess up. You’ve got to keep going. Same thing in air traffic control. When things aren’t going right, a pilot misses some communication or something, you have to adapt and carry on,” he says.

Muddy Waters by CAR287 Live at the Times Changed High and Lonesome...



For the members of CAR287, music is a stress reliever and a creative outlet.

“Playing music is pretty beneficial for me after a shift that was busier or a bit more challenging,” says Yarmey, who is a high-level controller and supervisor in Winnipeg’s airport tower.

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Over the past few years, the band has expanded beyond workplace entertainment to a fully fledged outfit performing regularly at local venues, including Dauphin's Country Fest this summer.

In September, CAR287 released its first full-length album of original music, entitled *Looking Through the Lens*, recorded at Winnipeg's Private Ear Recording studio.

Songwriting is a shared pursuit that began during the pandemic, with each band member taking a different tack.

Road Rage Leady Live at 201 Portage with Ed Garcia



Yarmey finds a tune first and draws lyrical inspiration from his life, relationships and hometown, penning the tracks *Gateway to the West* and *Road Rage Leady* (both of which are full of Winnipeggisms). The band's

Canadiana rock sound is also informed by Yarmey's not so mild obsession

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Ferguson, on the other hand, tried to take a poetic approach to social issues, writing songs about homelessness for the band's self-titled EP and co-writing *Passing of Day* for the new album.

"I'm more of a storyteller of events," Wog says. "I wrote a song called *Muddy Water*, which is the story of the 1997 flood."

Looking Through the Lens is available on Apple Music and Spotify. CAR287 performs at a fundraiser for the Leftovers foundation on Tuesday at Trans Canada Brewing.

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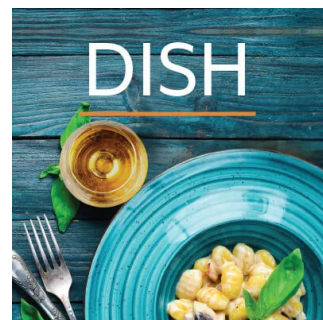
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HISTORY

Updated on Friday, October 24, 2025 6:55 AM CDT: Corrects spelling of Jay Yarmey's name

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