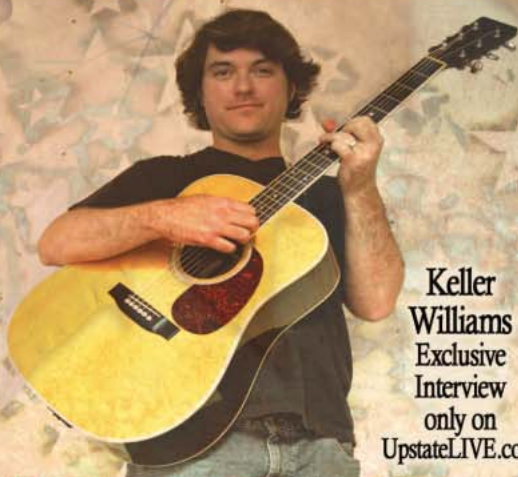


UpstateLIVE

NEW YORK STATE MUSIC GUIDE

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 6 (#36)

SEPTEMBER 7 - OCTOBER 18, 2012



Keller
Williams
Exclusive
Interview
only on
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Jimkata



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Alan Evans Trio

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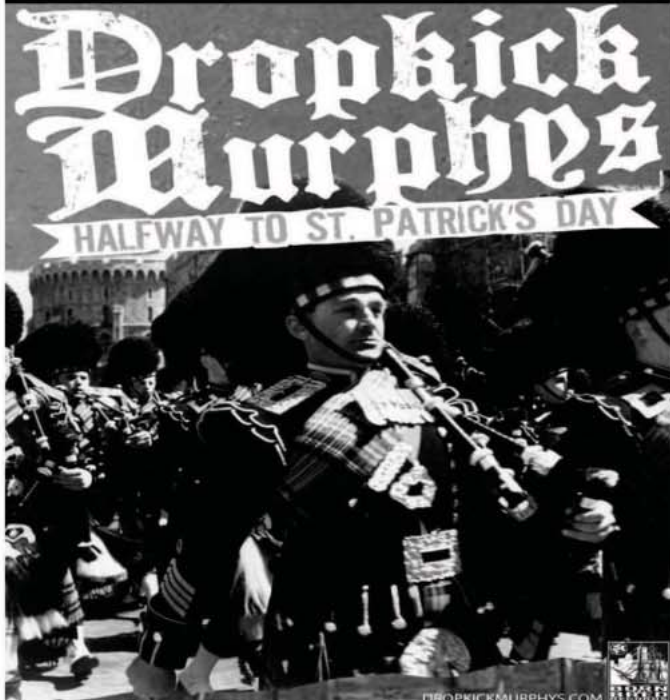
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Welcome to another issue of UpstateLIVE - officially issue #36. The summer season is over, but there are a few remaining fall festivals in the state - the biggest being the NY Harvest Festival & Freedom Fair. And club dates - they are a coming. Many of our favorite venues are releasing their fall schedules, and from what I've seen I'd say we are all in for a treat!

So that being said, and with school back in session, I decided it was a good time to start a live music venue directory. This list will help those of you who may be in new cities and college towns this fall. It's also a great resource for bands looking to broaden their fanbase. And it's probably the best place to pick up a new copy of UpstateLIVE :)

Enjoy the fall season, hopefully I will see you on the road. And please check out the rest of this issue, it has some great artist interviews, by some of the most passionate music fans in the Upstate area. We are lucky to have them!

Special thanks must be giving to our new online editor Pete Mason. Pete now supervises the content that is posted on the website, including setting up interviews and event reviews for our staff writers, monitoring our facebook writers forum, and marketing the website through different forms of social media. Speaking of the website, we will be upgrading the site in the next few months, and we are excited about the possibilities with the new design. Until then please stop in and visit www.UpstateLIVE.com

SAVE THE DATES!!!

**Fiddlers Picnic's
HALLOWEEN
HOEDOWN
Wed Oct 31st
V Pub - Canandaigua**

**Upstate
WINTER
BOOGIE
Sat Dec 29th
Water Street
Music Hall
Rochester**

LIVE MUSIC VENUE DIRECTORY

This is a partial list of live music venues in Upstate NY. We will run this list in the back of each upcoming issue as a venue directory. To have your venue listed please email the home office : upstatelivenet@gmail.com or text only 315-420-5467.

Albany / Capital District

The Palace Theatre - 19 Clinton Avenue - Albany
The Egg - Empire State Plaza - Albany
Valentines - 17 New Scotland Avenue - Albany
The Bayou Cafe - 79 North Pearl Street - Albany
Red Square - 388 Broadway - Albany
Proctors Theatre - 432 State Street - Schenectady
Upstate Music Hall - 1208 Rte 146 - Clifton Park
Putnam Den - 63 Putnam Street - Saratoga Springs
The Parting Glass - 73 Henry Street - Saratoga Springs
Troy Savings Bank Music Hall - 30 2nd Street - Troy
Dinosaur BBQ - 377 River St. - Troy

Catskill/Lower Hudson

Bearsville Theatre - 291 Tinker Street - Woodstock
Colony Cafe - 22 Rock City Road - Woodstock
Club Helsinki - 405 Columbia Street - Hudson
Ulster Performing Arts Center - 601 Broadway - Kingston
Keegan's Ales - 20 Saint James Street - Kingston
The Bardavon Opera House - 35 Market Street - Poughkeepsie
The Chance - 6 Crannell Street - Poughkeepsie
The Falcon - 1348 Rte 9w - Marlboro
Cabaloosa / Oasis Cafe - 58 Main Street - New Paltz
Snug Harbor - 38 Main Street - New Paltz
The Capitol Theatre - 149 Westchester Avenue - Port Chester

Mohawk Valley / Leatherstocking

Brewery Ommegang - 656 Cty Highway 33 - Cooperstown
Saranac Brewery - 830 Varick Street - Utica
The Celtic Harp - 805 Varick Street - Utica
Nail Creek - 720 Varick Street - Utica
Blu - 632 Varick Street - Utica
Piers & Blake - 330 Main Street - Utica
Tramontane Cafe - 1105 Lincoln Avenue - Utica
The Snubbing Post - Route 46 & Delta Dam Road - Rome
Blarney Stone Pub - 26 South Broad Street - Norwich
The Oneonta Theatre - 47 Chestnut Street - Oneonta
Autumn Cafe - 244 Main Street - Oneonta
The Black Oak - 17 Water Street - Oneonta

North Country / ADK

Zig Zags - 134 Main Street - Lake Placid
The Waterhole - 48 Main Street - Saranac Lake
Monopole - Plattsburgh
The Java Barn - St Lawrence Univ. - Canton
LaCasbah - 6 Elm St - Potsdam

CNY

The Landmark Theater - 362 South Salina Street - Syracuse
The Palace Theater - 2384 James Street - Syracuse
The Westcott Theater - 524 Westcott Street - Syracuse
Red House Arts Center - 201 South West Street - Syracuse
Al's Wine & Whiskey - 321 South Clinton Street - Syracuse
Empire Brewing Company - 120 Walton Street - Syracuse
Dinosaur Bar-B-Que - 246 West Willow Street - Syracuse
Dolce Vita - 907 East Genesee Street - Syracuse
Bull & Bear Pub - 125 East Water Street - Syracuse
Paper Mill Island - 136 Spensieri Avenue - Baldwinsville
Lake Effect - 7 Syracuse Street - Baldwinsville
Old City Hall - Water Street - Oswego

Finger Lakes North

Water Street Music Hall - 204 N. Water Street - Rochester
Abilene - 153 Liberty Pole Way - Rochester
Lovin' Cup - 300 Park Point Dr - Rochester
The Montage - 50 Chestnut Street - Rochester
Dubland Underground - 315 Alexander Street - Rochester
Sticky Lips - 830 Jefferson Road - Rochester
Dinosaur Bar-B-Que - 99 Court Street - Rochester
58 Main - 58 Main Street - Brockport
Smith Opera House - 82 Seneca Street - Geneva
V Pub - 245 S. Main St - Canandaigua
Lock 29 - 222 E. Main Street - Palmyra

Finger Lakes South

The State Theatre - 107 West State Street - Ithaca
The Haunt - 702 Willow Avenue - Ithaca
The Chapter House - 400 Stewart Avenue - Ithaca
The Nines - 311 College Avenue - Ithaca
Cyber Cafe West - 176 Main Street - Binghamton
Fitzies Pub - 9 Main Street - Binghamton
The Belmar Pub - 95 Main Street - Binghamton
John Barleycorn - 216 Front Street - Owego
The Rongovian Embassy - 1 West Main Street - Trumansburg

WNY

Town Ballroom - 681 Main Street - Buffalo
The Tralf - 622 Main Street - Buffalo
Nietzsche's - 248 Allen Street - Buffalo
DBGB's - 253 Allen Street - Buffalo
Mister Goodbar - 1110 Elmwood Avenue - Buffalo
Broadway Joes - 3051 Main Street - Buffalo
Mohawk Place - 47 East Mohawk Street - Buffalo
Rapids Theatre - 1711 Main Street - Niagara Falls
Hard Rock Cafe - 333 Prospect Street - Niagara Falls
Mojo's - 104 East 2nd Street - Jamestown



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THE NEW YORK HARVEST FESTIVAL & FREEDOM FAIR RETURNS TO UPSTATE NY OCT 12-15 *by Herby One*

One of the signature festivals in Upstate NY the past 15+ years returns after a 2 year absence. The 16th annual NY Harvest Festival & Freedom Fair, the brainchild of activist/promoter Rob Robinson, will be held October 12-15 at Kutcher's Country Club in Monticello, NY. I had the chance to ask Rob a few questions about the festival past and present.

Herby One: What led you to produce the original NYS Harvest Festival? where and when was it??

Rob Robinson: I founded and ran an event called The HempSplash that started at the ArrowHead Ranch in Parkville, NY. This was way back in 1990! The HempSplash was later moved to Lembo Lake in Modena, NY (1995) and The NY Harvest Festival became the later in the year HempSplash Party! The 1st NY Harvest Festival & Freedom Fair was held on Oct 21 & 22, 1995 in Modena, NY - Lembo Lake.

Herby: I guess the BIG news this time around is the new venue. Can you tell us a little bit about the venue and what attendees can expect there?

Rob: The new venue is nothing short of amazing! After leaving Camp Minglewood, we knew we needed to find something special. Then we went to Rock n' Roll Resort at Kutsher's Country Club in Monticello, NY - hosted by Wicked Cool Productions. The event was amazing and we had a great time. The idea of making this resort a full on camping festival was something that was too tempting not to try. So here we are, at a 250 room resort, 3 stages outdoor and 3 stages indoor, and a huge outdoor and indoor vendor and artist area. Camping on the lawns of the grounds! The Catskill Mountains, the entertainment, the resort, the Harvest Fest family, are sure to make this venue, and year, one not soon to forget!

Herby: The list of bands and speakers is impressive. Did you have a set list of acts you wanted to include?

Rob: Well to be honest, we were not sure we would be able to build such a line-up. But we are humbled and honored to be bringing to Kutsher's Resort: 7 Walkers, Immortal Technique, Pete Seeger with Mike + Ruthy, The Dead Milkmen, John K of Furthur solo acoustic, Tony Vacca's World Rhythms, Murphy's Law, Maaze with special guest Kenny Brooks of Ratdog, the list goes on and on! Hoping to see some very special things happening with folk legend Pete Seeger at his Sunday appearance.

When it comes to the speakers, we have the cream of the crop! Saturday's keynote speaker is Pastor Kenneth Glasgow of The Ordinary People's Society. Kenny is nothing short of an amazing, on the ground activist and is also the little brother of Rev. Al Sharpton. He is an amazing, passionate anti drug war speaker. Then on Sunday we have Superior Court Judge of Orange County CA. James Gray. James is also the Libertarian Candidate for Vice President of the USA, running with Gov. Gary Johnson. We also have Mayor of New Paltz: Jason West, over 10 medical marijuana patients, advocates, activists and more. This crowd will get some education, on top of entertainment, for sure!

Herby: The NY Harvest Festival and Freedom Fair is the must not miss event of the season. If you have never attended, then you really should get your tickets and see what thousands of others have already experienced. It's a life changer!! For more info visit the official site --> damnsam.com



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Jimkata
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Papi Chulo
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Beer

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Lov-a-Palooza is riddled with great breweries.

Local beer tasting featuring:

3HB, Roc Brewing, CB's, Rohrbach's, Naked Dove and more...



Love -a- Palooza



Vendors

Mariah Rose Tattoos
Ilana Zatkowsky Sugar and type
Snyder Handcrafted syrups
Claire Flare
Malex Demmerly Prints & Glasswork
A Different View
Moorethenart
CTW Metal
And many more...



Highlights

3HB & Clown-Shoes Brewing (Boston) will release their hybrid beer for the first time EVER:

THE THIRD PARTY CANDIDATE

and

SILENT DISCO

Featured with RIP ROC



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**JOSH
RITTER**

SEPT. 15



**CAROLINA
CHOCOLATE
DROPS**

SEPT. 26



**PUNCH
BROS.**

SEPT. 29



**JUDY
COLLINS**

OCT. 4



**CAT
POWER**

OCT. 18



**GLEN
CAMPBELL**

OCT. 25



**GOV'T
MULE**

OCT. 27



**INDIGO
GIRLS**

OCT. 30



**CITIZEN
COPE**

NOV. 1



**BELA
FLECK**
NY BANJO
SUMMIT

NOV. 2



**MATIS-
YAHU**

NOV. 6



**JOHN
HIATT
AND THE
COMBO**

NOV. 16



AND MANY MORE • WWW.DANSMALLSPRESENTS.COM

This MUST be the Column!

by Pete Mason

Interview with Scott Murawski

Scott Murawski has been playing music with legendary band Max Creek since he was in high school. With a career spanning over 40 years with Max Creek, as well a member of side projects BK3 and Mike Gordon Band, as well as two festivals that bear his band's name, Camp Creek and StrangeCreek, Murawski is a legend among jamband fans for his expansive career and incredible guitar sound. Upstate Live's online editor, Pete Mason, talked with Scott about Max Creek, music festivals and playing with Mike Gordon.

Max Creek performed at Backwoods Pondfest in Plattsburgh, NY on Saturday August 18th and at Bella Terra in Stephentown, NY on Sunday August 19th.

Pete Mason: MaxCreek has just celebrated 41 years together as a band, a rare feat for any musical act. How do you explain the longevity of the band?

Scott Murawski: We've lasted this long because we don't speak to each other! Kidding! Way back in the beginning before "mission statements" were in fashion, we came up with the idea that Max Creek should be a place where people come to create, including the band, crew and audience. I think this attitude has given us a place where we feel the most comfortable being creative, and a place where we can bring any idea and have it accepted. Sometimes you might have to play songs that aren't necessarily your favorites to play, but it's an easy trade off to be able to bring any creative idea to the band and have it at least tried. I believe that this attitude is responsible for those magic moments that can only happen when everyone lets go, and that magic keeps happening and keeps us all coming back for more!

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PM: You were 15 when you joined Max Creek. What was that experience like for you and how did it shape you as you grew up with the band?

SM: It was a great experience in many ways. It was a relief to get out of my "jock" high school and hang with college kids. It was great to be underage and playing guitar in bars. It was great to be thrown in with musicians vastly better than myself. But most of all it was great to establish connections with people that would remain my "other" family throughout my life, and to be part of an organization that would bring such beauty to so many people for years and years.

PM: What are some of your favorite memories and notable shows over the course of Max Creek's career?

SM: Oh man. There have been so many shows!! I remember playing at Hammonasset Beach State Park in the late 80s. We were headlining along with Thunder Road and Cryer (I think) and they were expecting a few hundred kids and instead, 30,000 people showed up! All of the Camp Creeks have been memorable. Most recently having the band play in Costa Rica is a VERY cool thing!

PM: Sound engineer John Archer was a pivotal part of Max Creek and his loss had a large impact on the band. In what way did he impact the band and leave a lasting impression on the groups legacy?

SM: John was like the 5th Beatle for us. I personally feel that the sound man is the MOST important member of the band because all of the sound goes through him before anyone hears it. In the 70s and early 80s we were on the bleeding edge of technology. We were always trying to have the best sound possible and we built our own PA system and we used differential microphones and a four way crossed over system. We were always experimenting and trying to find (or make) the best of the best. Archer was an integral part of that. And even after that period, when we stopped owning our own PA and were depending on house sound systems, or rented systems, John had his own effects rack that he would bring in. He knew exactly what he wanted this band to sound like and would take extraordinary steps to get there. We owned sound analysis equipment and before each show John would "tune" whatever PA was being used, and more often than not, ended up fixing broken gear for the house. It was a great blow to the band and its sound when he left and he is still very much missed.

PM: Camp Creek was one of the longest running festivals in the country. What made that festival experience unique, and how have StrangeCreek and Jungle Jam built off the success of past festivals?

SM: I think the thing that made Camp Creek so amazing was the attitude of "Have fun, just don't hurt anyone." Again, it was the philosophy of come and be creative in any way you want. What I loved about most of the Camp Creeks was that there was only one main stage, and one smaller stage in the same area, so that there was really only one musical act to see at any given moment. I think the festivals today are trying to cram too much music down everyone's throat. They're hiring too many bands, which jacks the ticket price up, and forces audiences to choose between the bands they want to see.

The other thing that made Camp Creek so special was the feeling of family at the event. Everybody was on the hill at the same time listening to the same music and it felt great that way. And there was a family feel between all the musicians and bands as well with much jamming and cross pollination between the various artists.

PM: 'You're the Only One' is one of your most popular songs and leads to audience members singing along, even with proposals during the song. What is it about this song that makes it feel so seminal and are there any other songs that you feel define Max Creek over the course of their career?

SM: John Rider writes a great song, doesn't he? People want hope. People want to belong. And they want to sing! I think that "Only One" achieves all of these with great success. It's so hard to have a lasting relationship these days. Peoples' attention spans are getting shorter and shorter and the globalization of our community has enabled us to reach out to exponentially more people than ever before. I think when people are singing 'Only One' they feel like they are part of something larger than themselves and this larger thing is giving them hope that someday they will find the one person they have been dreaming about. I'd be hard pressed to tell you what other songs define the band. I have no perspective on it!



PM: How and when did you first meet Mike Gordon? What was your first encounter like?

SM: We met when we were playing in Burlington and Mike was in college up there. My first memory of him was him giving me a transcription of one of my guitar solos. Along with it was a recording of the solo, a bootleg of Creek doing "Emotional Railroad", with Creek on the right channel, and Mike playing bass on the left channel. I was pretty impressed that someone had actually paid that much attention to what I was doing.

PM: You have been playing guitar in Mike Gordon's band for a few years now. How is playing in Gordo's band different than Max Creek, and what does this collection of musicians bring to the stage each night?

SM: Mike has an incredible work ethic and in Mike's band you have to have a similar work ethic if you want to keep up. Mike's band rehearses for many long days before a tour and we not only rehearse tunes, we also practice jamming together. Creek never rehearsed jamming, in fact, I don't think we ever even discussed jamming. For Creek jamming was something that just developed over the years but it always seemed easy to us.

The guys in Mike band come from a variety of backgrounds. Tom teaches jazz at UVM, and Todd plays jazz in NYC, while both Todd and Craig have traveled the world learning about different types of music. It's not dissimilar to Creek where each of us has our own tastes and our own styles that we bring to the table. In both bands those styles mesh into a cohesive unit but those units are each as unique as the elements that make them up.

PM: Phish covered Back Porch Boogie Blues back in the late 80s with Mike convincing the band it was an original bluegrass composition when it was actually a Max Creek song. How did you come to learn of this cover and what was your reaction to being covered by a then-unknown band from Vermont?

SM: Mike told me that story years after it happened. I think it's hilarious! I enjoy hearing other bands cover my tunes and will seek them out!!

PM: On the road with Mike, you seem to have a hand in song selection, singing 'One Hand in my Pocket' as well as playing 'Sugar Shack'. How do you approach these songs, contribute to the band's repertoire and setlist selection each night?

SM: I've brought in a few of my originals including 'Jones' and 'Willow Tree' but have also brought in some odd covers like Radiohead's '15 Steps' and The Shins 'Kissing The Lipless'. Mike usually puts together a rough setlist early in the day and will usually run it by me before he shares it with the rest of the band. Between us, we have over 70 years of playing to audiences and I think we both have some instinct as to how the energy of a show will flow and what songs lend themselves to certain moments within a set. Mike is always encouraging all of us to bring tunes into the band. Even though the band carries his name he really wants it to be a group effort and is open to trying anything any of us wants to do.

PM: What do you feel is the long term impact of Max Creek and Phish on the music scene in the Northeast and throughout the country?

SM: I would like to think that Max Creek is, and has been, an inspiration to younger musicians to play more experimental and improvisational music, and the same must be true for Phish as well. It's a great honor to consider that we might have inspired Phish in some way! I think what separated Max Creek and Phish from a lot of other acts is that both bands strove to find their own sound. Even when performing covers, Creek never tried to emulate the exact sound of the originals, but rather strove to put our own imprint on them and interpret them our own way. I would hope that we encourage musicians to find their own voices rather than emulate ours. I also think that both bands have always attempted to make each show an event for the audiences and as a result both bands developed "a scene" at each show. And perhaps both bands have been influential in the creation of the "jam band" genre.

PM: You performed with the Bill Kreutzman Trio and have utilized improvisation inspired by the Grateful Dead. Were you approached to play with Furthur before John Kadlecik got the gig?

SM: I was not. Although my playing has been inspired by the Dead, I don't think I sound like Garcia, nor do I want to, and I'm not sure my sound would fit into the Furthur sound. I have a lot of respect and admiration for John K and his ability to emulate that sound and style!



Guthrie Bell Productions

the blind owl band w/ driftwood
Thursday, September 13 : Red Square - Albany

timbre coup w/s/g capital zen
Friday, September 14 : The Bayou Cafe - Albany

eastbound jesus w/s/g flabberghaster
Friday, September 21 : The Bayou Cafe - Albany

formula 5 w/ funktional flow
Saturday, September 22 : Red Square - Albany

project/object
Thursday, September 27 : The Bayou Cafe - Albany

brothers past w/ timbre coup
Friday, September 28 : Valentines - Albany

consider the source w/s/g the mdovins and flux capacitor
Saturday, September 29 : Red Square - Albany

biodiesel
Saturday, October 20 : Red Square - Albany

max creek halloween weekend celebration
Friday, October 26 & Saturday, October 27
The Fort William Henry Hotel - Lake George

timbre coup / formula 5
Saturday, October 27 : Red Square - Albany

floodwood w/s/g the sunny side of the street band
Wednesday, October 31 : Valentine's - Albany

dark star orchestra
Wednesday, December 5 : The Egg - Albany

<http://facebook.com/guthriebell>

Backwoods Pondfest Revisited

Festivals are becoming so common place, it's hard to find that festival that doesn't feel too big or hasn't gone the corporate route. Back in 2008, I drove north on a whim to Peru, NY, a town I was unaware of until Backwoods Pondfest was announced. Back then, The Breakfast and Plattsburgh's Lucid headlined and I figured this would be a nice way to see what a festival looks like in its nascent years. I returned in 2010 and saw that the festival had grown, just enough to show that it was going to continue to grow at a steady pace. When I drove the two hours north to Backwoods, I wasn't surprised to see a bigger festival, more fans, more vendors, two stages and a scene that brought me back to some of my first festivals. Backwoods Pondfest is the festival that reminds you what the festival experience is all about – seeing music both familiar and new, hanging with friends and strangers alike, and experiencing nature and camping in an ideal setting.

I missed Friday because I was at John Prine and Lucinda Williams, but I talked to fans who gave high marks to Break Science, Floodwood, Sister Sparrow and the Dirty Birds and Twiddle for their performances. Backwoods always delivers on the music and this year was no exception with two jam packed nights. I arrived on Saturday around 3pm and found the festival more spacious, filled in with campers in parts that empty back in 2008 and vendors of a wide variety taking up a ring around the main stage field.

Jatoba from Brattleboro, VT was the first act of the day I caught. I saw them back in 2010 with Cornmeal at Red Square in Albany and I was impressed. This time they were even better and tighter. They are rumored to be playing some supporting Northeast dates in the fall/winter and will be stopping in Upstate NY for sure.

Lucid, the host band of Backwoods took the stage for an evening set and played to a crowd that gravitated towards the stage as Lucid warmed up. Sporting some of the finest North Country beards around, Lucid brought up special guest Rooster, aka Rick Bentley from Birmingham, Alabama, to sit in on guitar for "Countryesque". Rooster was in the audience when Lucid played in his town and while he sat through their soundcheck, they bantered back and forth and clicked, leading to Rooster heading north to take in Backwoods Pondfest and sit in. A great guitar and friendly southerner, Rooster felt welcome at the festival, a bit of a rarity down south. Next, percussionist Lowell Wurster invited his father George (and festival MC) to sit in on harmonica for "Backwoods", to which George introduced to the crowd at the end as being "all the way from the great Adirondacks" and the applause thundered from the crowd leading to a return to the stage for an encore of "Green Money".

Max Creek, having "been around for a few years now", as MC George put it (really though, more than 40 years) performed as Saturday headliners, ranging through originals and covers alike, including "Helter Skelter", "Rag Mama Rag" and "Cities". Afterwards, guitarist Scott Murawski mentioned how Phish bassist Mike Gordon texted him that Trey had listened to Scott playing "Sugar Shack" so that he could nail the guitar riff in transition. It turns out that while Max Creek was onstage at Backwoods, Phish was playing "Sugar Shack" for the first time since October, 2010. A very cool musical connection and story bridging two bands 3,000 miles away.

A staple of Backwoods has been the acts of Tim Palmieri: The Breakfast and Kung Fu, the latter of which is alive and well and put on a great late night set on the main stage. It helps for a festival to have a known music element like this and the crowd clearly appreciates Kung Fu and their funky performances.

The late-latenight action belonged to The Indobox at the tent stage. If you wanted your latenight jams, mixed with elements of techno and dance music, then this fulfilled your wishes and overflowed the cup. If there was any band that could rise out of the clutter of EDM acts and perform live electronica at a high level, then The Indobox is that band. For over an hour, the tent was another 20' warmer inside, steamy and full of dancing bodies moving to the truly impressive tightness of The Indobox. If this were the late '90s, we'd be seeing a glimmer of an early Disco Biscuits group. Do not miss them at Catskill Chill on Saturday September 8th at 4:20 in the afternoon.

Backwoods Pondfest remains a diamond in the rough of music festivals. Few festivals give you the pure, original festival feeling like this one. Make plans for the 2013 edition, which UpstateLIVE will be covering as announcements on dates and lineup come out in the spring. Festival-goers who have been to just a few or a few dozen fests, Backwoods is for you.

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An interview with Alan Evans of The Royal Family

Alan Evans has been the drummer for funky alt-jazz trio Soulive since 1999 and laying the foundation for The Royal Family record label. With his new group, Alan Evans Trio, touring this fall in support of Drop Hop, their debut album. Alan spoke with UpstateLIVE's Pete Mason regarding his new project, The Royal Family and growing up in Buffalo. The group is currently on tour, performing at Catskill Chill Music Festival on September 8th, Nietzsche's in Buffalo on September 27th and The Haunt in Ithaca on September 28th.

Pete Mason: The Royal Family – you, Krasno, Neal, Nigel, Deitch, Zoidis and others – combine for a number of acts, some that intertwine the musicians into side projects and some that stand alone. How is it that an eclectic group of musicians can come together under one label and produce albums and acts that have broad appeal and a solid following?

Alan Evans: Most importantly we're all friends and we all enjoy playing music with each other and we enjoy each other's music and that's really what it's all about. It's a family, we've known each other, most of us, Deitch and Zoidis and Kras, we've known each other for 20 years now, so we've been at it a long time. It's all about having fun and making good music.

PM: How does the Alan Evans Trio differ from other Royal Family acts?

AE: It differs in that Beau and Danny playing with me and they're just different people, their take on music and their influences, it's different from everybody else. A lot of us grew up listening to the same things but then we perceive those things as individuals, and that helps create your sound and your take on music, so that's pretty much the difference, just the individuals and the individual take on music.

PM: Working with new musicians, how does their presence in a free form improvisation setting change the musical environment you become accustomed to, even if only briefly?

AE: It's funny, it depends. Sometimes there are very subtle differences and sometimes they can make be huge (differences). For instance, we just did this album with Karl Denson, and we have played with Karl on many occasions, but just throwing him in the mix, the way he plays, we're all ears, we're always listening or reacting to what he does, so we have Ryan Zoidis up there playing with us and literally the next night, have Karl play the same exact tune, definitely completely different. Again, it's all about people's vocabulary and improvisational music is using that vocabulary to have a conversation, but at other times it can be very subtle. The thing with Neal, Eric and I, and all of us really, we're always listening to each other so it's not a one sided conversation.

PM: The debut album from Alan Evans Trio is Drop Hop. Consider the uninitiated jazz fan who is unfamiliar with your work – how do you pitch the album to them as a must listen?

AE: I can't understate enough that I love to have fun and playing with cats who like to have fun too. The album itself, there's no political statements; it's a fun album that I just pulled my influences in on for the album, like Booker T and the M.G.s and The Meters. The album has a definite vibe and it takes you somewhere and if you want to go on a quick little journey, that's the album to check out.

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PM: The new trio includes you on drums, Danny Mayer on guitar and Beau Sasses on organ. How did you first connect with each of them and how did the Trio come together as a result?

AE: Beau and I have known each other for a long time. He's always been a part of Royal Family circle, even before we had an idea of what the Royal Family was. Beau is a Boston cat and I've known Beau a long time and he does regular gigs out near my house in and basically, it's an every Wednesday gig and whoever's around will show up, it's a rotating cast of characters on this show. So Beau asked me while I had some time off the road from Soulive and we're hanging out and playing and that's when I was like "OK, I want to create a band with this guy here," and that was the initial scene.

Danny, who initially came to me as a Soulive fan and musician, he wanted me to engineer and produce his band, the On the Spot Trio for their album, and then it became two albums. The last album I did for them we did out in Santa Cruz, California, and while I making the album, I was out there for like three weeks, Danny and a friend of his asked me to do a regular Tuesday night gig there, and that was the first time I got to play with Danny. That's when I knew, "I gotta put Danny and Beau together." So I started us with a few tunes, and I thought "I'll record an EP and see what happens," so I set the recording date, the mastering date, I had Danny's ticket to fly out east, and when I got home from Jamcruise, they were going to record maybe two weeks after Jamcruise and I ended up writing the entire album. We got in the studio and the first day when Danny and Beau met each other and it just clicked and that's the history.

PM: Buffalo is you and your brother Neal's hometown. In what way did growing up in Buffalo influence your musical upbringing and how did you develop as a musician while in high school in Buffalo?

AE: Buffalo is an interesting place because back in the day it was a huge stop on the soul/jazz circuit, punk rock, everybody was coming through Buffalo. So growing up, all those influences were around us in the city and in the music we were growing up listening to. When I was about 11 years old that was when I started gigging out in clubs and such, and the cool thing about that was that I was really young and I'm hanging out with all these older musicians, very experienced, been on the road and played with everybody and everyone was very supportive, which was amazing. There weren't a lot of haters in Buffalo, everyone was always willing to give you a chance, and then it was up to you, once you were on stage if you were going to stay up on stage. If you weren't a hit, they would let you know kindly. It was a very supportive musical community.

PM: You are playing Catskill Chill September 8th, a hometown stop at Nietzsche's September 27th and The Haunt in Ithaca September 28th, covering much of Upstate New York. Is there an aspect to Upstate New York that you enjoy returning to when touring makes it possible, and what can you recommend to those who head out of New York City and venture into Upstate?

AE: I have a special place in my heart for Upstate New York. I've been touring this area for as long as I can remember. It's hard for me to remember having a bad show upstate. I don't know what it is about it, people love to get down and have a good time. Some of my favorites, Syracuse, Rochester with the Jazz Festival is amazing; I would always anyone go check that out, it's an amazing festival. Playing in Buffalo for me obviously involves seeing friends and family, that's just amazing, plus when you're in Buffalo you gotta get some chicken wings. Ithaca is always dope and a crazy music scene. It's a small town and I can think of so many great bands that have come out of there. The old Haunt has been gone for a long time but the tradition is still being carried on. There's something in the water there; it's a lot of fun to play, people really appreciate music in Upstate New York.

PM: Having collaborated with a variety of musicians over the years, both live and in the studio, what artists out there are you looking forward to working with in the future, either ones that you know or ones that you hope to know?

AE: Man, that is a tough one. What I've discovered over the years is that the collaborations that have worked best and I have enjoyed the most are the ones I wasn't looking for, and then there have been collaborations that we worked on very hard at getting so and so into the studio and it just doesn't work. The reason is, what I have found is that when people come and see us or hear about us and they're really digging on it, there's something about a more personal connection, rather than its just kind of business. With that said, one person I would love to work with, and we kinda have at one of our Bowlives is Van Hunt. Van has become a friend which is really cool, so I can hit him up whenever and we can just kick it. I'd love to get in the studio or just play live with him again. He's just an incredible musician, incredible composer, incredible lyricist, incredible writer, all around the dude is just dangerous. On top of that he's just an amazing human being, a really cool cat. That's one that I'm really waiting on.

Check out more from Alan Evans Trio at alanevantrio.com and Royal Family Records. Alan Evans Trio plays Catskill Chill in Hancock, NY on Sept 8th, Nietzsche's in Buffalo on September 27th and The Haunt in Ithaca on September 28th.

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