

DONT GIVE UP YOUR DAY JOB

"The best musicians you've never heard..."

Information Sheet (December 2014)

Copyright © 2014 by Tom Weber Films LLC

Story and Approach

Our understanding of music and musicians is so heavily shaped by media-cultivated notions of celebrity, wealth and fame that we lose sight of the function of music as a meaningful cultural practice for millions of people. Although technology has made it easier than ever to create, reproduce and disseminate music -- enabling millions of people to perform live and create recordings and videos -- it has become harder than ever to gain wide exposure. Programs like "American Idol" and "The Voice" largely serve to reinforce traditional notions of talent and the power of industry gatekeepers.

In my previous documentary, *Troubadour Blues* (2011), I explored the lives of musicians who follow the tradition of the troubadour, the itinerant musician traveling from place to place, picking up ideas and making up songs along the way. In this film, I am engaging with community-based musicians in a wide spectrum from hard rock to grand opera, in communities large and small across the United States. Some of them are weekend musicians who play mostly for fun, while others are hard-working professionals who stitch together a livelihood playing gigs, teaching private lessons and recording with other musicians.

The film is inspired by *The Hidden Musicians*, a book by the U.K. sociologist Ruth Finnegan, who is cooperating in the production. The visual style is relatively straightforward, with the goal of achieving a sense of intimacy between the movie audience and the participants.

Starting with local musicians with whom I grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania (a small city with a thriving musical community and supportive audience), I am moving outward to meet unforgettable characters who practice their musical craft in communities from California to Maine and from North Dakota to Texas. The film will thus showcase the scenic as well as musical diversity of a vast and still wide-open country. Interviews revolve around participants'

definitions of success, talent, professionalism; their sense of place; and their ideas about the larger music industry. The importance of technology in the production and dissemination of music, particularly the role of social media and the Internet, is another focal point.

Interviews and informal scenes will be intercut with musical performances that showcase these "local" artists, shot and edited with the high production values usually reserved for celebrity musicians. About 200 hours of footage has been collected to date (December 2014). This includes a substantial amount of live footage showing the participants in action. In some instances, participants who are not previously acquainted are shown performing together.

The finished film will be premiered at theatrical events in major music markets, with the participation of musicians from the film and others recruited locally. A series of these event screenings will be presented in a relatively short window (one or two months) to maximize publicity for the home video release and a continuing series of smaller screenings. The film will be promoted heavily at the National Association of Music Merchandisers (NAMM) show in Los Angeles and through independently owned local music stores in as many localities as possible.

The film represents a significant sponsorship opportunity for corporations and individuals with an interest in furthering musical participation, such as local music stores, online retailers, musical instrument manufacturers, music schools and record companies. MVD Entertainment Group will again handle retail distribution in both DVD/Blu-Ray and digital platforms.

Why This, Why Now?

Participation in music is one of the most widely popular activities in our culture; yet much of this activity is obscured from public view by its very ordinariness. Dominant media companies have promoted an environment in which money, fame and celebrity are seen as gauges of musical quality, and have mythologized the career path for musicians: the best musicians are "discovered" by major media, becoming "national acts" and winning over the mass audience via recordings, large-scale tours and media appearances. Meanwhile, millions of musicians spend their lives developing their skills and providing local entertainment while holding down jobs, raising families and participating in community life. As a filmmaker, I feel an obligation to explore the hidden corners of our culture, and this is my primary reason for making this film.

Director Bio

Tom Weber is a documentary filmmaker whose work examines musical performance in its social and cultural contexts. His feature-length film Troubadour Blues (2011), which documents the lives of a dozen singer-songwriters on the folk/roots circuit, is in home video distribution through MVD Entertainment Group. Weber also produces concert videos, electronic press kits and artist profiles. Weber is co-author of Reggae Island: Jamaican Music in the Digital Age (DaCapo Press, 1998) and received his Ph.D. from Bowling Green State University in Communication Studies/Ethnomusicology. He has taught communication and filmmaking at several colleges and universities, and is a former broadcast and print journalist. A longtime musician himself, Weber is a native of Erie, Pa., where he resides.

Participants To Date

Alcott, Sasha	Musician/High school science teacher	Bangor, ME
Apple, Nancy	Musician/Label Owner/DJ/Tour Guide	Memphis, TN
Bensink, Kevin	Bassist/Bandleader	Erie, PA
Bodner, Steve	Singer/Songwriter	Pittsburgh, PA
Bogs, Hieronymus	Itinerant Performer/Storyteller	Rochester, NY
Brewer, Eric	Guitarist/Songwriter	Erie, PA
Cattaneo, Susan	Songwriter/Artist/Berklee faculty	Boston, MA
DiBello, Rick	Musician/Producer	Erie, PA
Dignam, Mark	Singer/songwriter	Pittsburgh, PA
Elkins, Craig	Indie rock artist (Huffamoose)	Los Angeles, CA
Forsythe, Sllim	Bandleader/Cowboy singer	Lawrenceville, PA
Graham, Michael	Musician/Record store owner	Erie, PA
Greenberger, David	Musician/Spoken Word Artist	Greenwich, NY
Holland, Deborah	Songwriter/Recording Artist	Vancouver, BC
Hogan, Jon	Itinerant musician (Hogan & Moss)	Gatlinburg, TN
Holquist, Adam	Musician/Jeopardy winner	Erie, PA
Hopsecger, Derf	Musician/Accountant	Erie, PA
Hyman, Heath	Berklee student	Boston, MA
Hyman, Sam	Songwriter/Musician	Erie, PA
Kalinec, Brian	Artist/Label owner/Geophysicist	Houston, TX
Keogh, Christen	Berklee student	Boston, MA
Lawrence, Erik	Saxophonist (Levon Helm Band)	New York, NY
Martin, Sue	Singer/songwriter (Planet Claire)	Erie, PA
McCaslin, Randall	Musician (various bands)	Edinboro, PA
McDonas, Thollem	Improvisational Keyboardist	Santa Fe, NM
Miles, Solitaire	Jazz/Country Swing Vocalist	Chicago, IL
Montgomery, Rodger	Blues Musician	Meadville, PA
Moss, Maria	Itinerant musician (Hogan & Moss)	Gatlinburg, TN
Nardini, Norman	Bandleader/Musician	Pittsburgh, PA
Niebauer, Skip	Musician/Studio owner	Erie, PA
Pickart, Matthew	Classical/jazz violinist/violist	East Lansing, MI
Podrasky, Jimmer	Indie rock artist (The Rave-Ups)	Los Angeles, CA
Popp, Joe	Experimental guitarist	Erie, PA
Rhys, John Jack	Musician/filmmaker	Erie, PA
Rullo, Gina	Bassist/singer (Planet Claire)	Erie, PA
Russell, Mike	Drummer (Tradesmen, Fun Guns)	Erie, PA
Schwartz, Jalapeño	Songwriter/Broadcaster/Physician	Fort Davis, TX
Singer, Frank	Guitarist/keyboardist (various bands)	Erie, PA
Sprague, Mckenzie	Singer/songwriter	Fairview, PA
Trohoske, Stephen	Bassist, arranger (various bands)	Erie, PA
Vickery, Liss	Singer/Songwriter	Erie, PA
Whaley, Ernest	Singer/Songwriter	Portland, OR
Winsick, Mark	Musician/Process Server	Buffalo, NY
Wynn, John	Berklee student	Boston, MA

For More Information

Tom Weber, Producer/Director
(412) 370-1736
tomweberfilms@gmail.com
<http://tomweberfilms.com>