

# The Post-Journal

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## Area Drummers Talk Inspiration, Motivation And Passion For Music



Jamestown native Marco Scapelittle of the Porcelain Busdrivers can be found performing with local groups. Submitted photo

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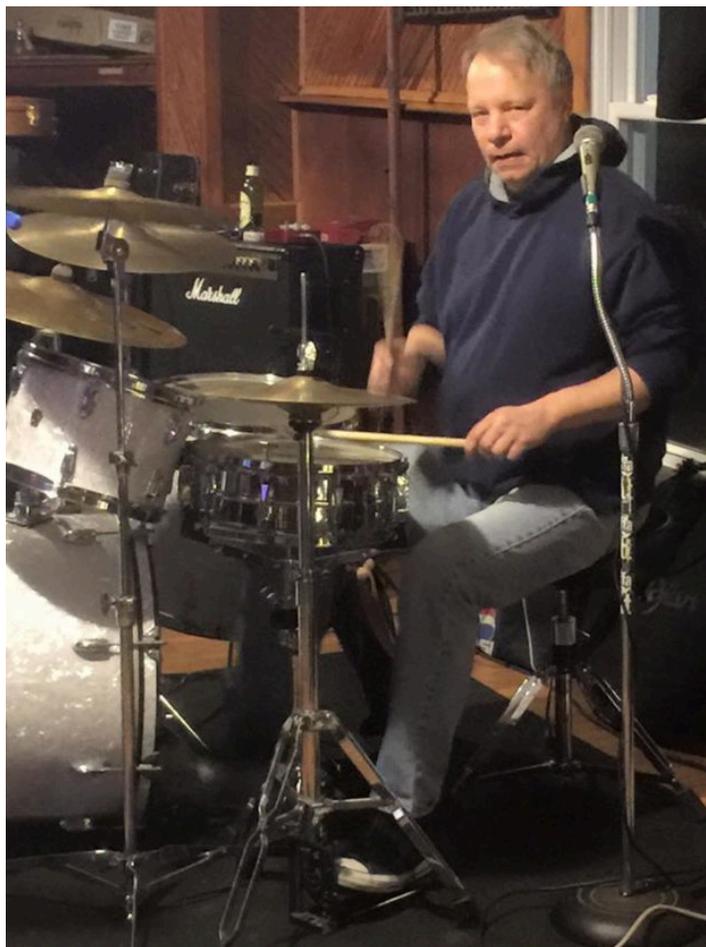
For most live music ensembles, drums are a crucial component to the overall performance of the act.

The individuals who play the instrument, although rarely at the forefront of a typical stage show, are intended to serve as the backbone of the band; acting as the anchor to which all other group members must, ideally, remain tethered as they perform their own parts.

But what is it that makes the instrument so appealing to those who are interested in live performance, and what has kept drummers so engaged in their craft for years, sometimes decades, at a time? The Post-Journal recently spoke with three local drummers currently performing in ensembles that can be seen in and around the greater Jamestown area to find what keeps these individuals marching to the beat of their own drum.

The following are the responses we received from Jim Sturdevant, Marco Scapelitte and Nick Campbell in their own words:

**JIM STURDEVANT**



Warren native Jim Sturdevant has been performing on drums for the better part of 40 years. He has appeared in several local, regional and national acts. Submitted photo

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Jim Sturdevant is Warren, Pa., native who has been performing on drums for nearly four decades. He has appeared in several local, regional and national acts through the years, and can currently be found playing drums for The Elektra Kings, Danger Bird, Screamin' Lou, and other acts:

I got into drumming and music pretty much like a lot of other people. In fourth grade, we got to pick an instrument to play. I picked drums, or what I thought was drums; it was really a practice pad and a pair of sticks.

A few weeks after the start of that, my dad, who was also a drummer (of Pete Pepke fame back in the '50s) turned me on to Benny Goodman's

*“Sing, Sing, Sing”* and the rest, as they say, is history. I practiced my rudiments on the pad and later that year got a marching snare drum for Christmas, which I still have.

At this same time I had a fourth-grade classmate who played guitar, and he kept telling me to get a drum set and we would start a band. That classmate was none other than Laith Wardi. I did get a drumset when I was 12; a Rogers five-piece Holiday set in Black Strata with the Dynasonic snare. Man, I wish I still had that kit.

So we started a rock band, playing some covers but also writing our own songs — as simplistic as they were — which, looking back on, was a catalyst for my growing passion for music. (We were) actually creating something from silence that had never been created before. Still, at this time, I was in school concert band and marching band, which helped me with the technical side of drumming — rudiments and more importantly being able to read and write music.

Laith and I started playing gigs when we were in high school; dances mostly. Once we turned 18 we were able to play the bars in New York state because their drinking age was 18. After high school my bandmates went off to their respective colleges and I stayed in town working to save money to go to college myself. Berklee College of Music in Boston was my choice.

I started playing in a country band that was in town, and the guitar player, Bobby Owens, still plays to this day in Touch of Gold. I met him when Laith and I were recording some of our original rock songs at his studio. He mentioned that he needed a drummer and I basically said *“where and when?”* That was my first sub gig; no rehearsals, just show up and play. I’m not sure how I did, but they kept me on as their drummer.

I ended up going to Berklee in 1982, and my major was “*professional music*.” I played in a bunch of bands (in Boston), including a rock band called The Tribe, with now Heart bassist and producer Dan Rothchild. We played the clubs in Boston for a year or so.

During college I started working as a bar back at a legendary jazz and blues club in Harvard Square named “*Jonathan Swift’s*.” I met pretty much all of my drum idols there, in addition to a lot of rock, jazz and blues stars.

I actually got to hang and talk with these musicians. They all told me to just keep playing. There was a local drummer there named Tom Major, and he was in like seven bands — rock, blues, reggae, soul, country, fusion, etc.; you name it, he played it. I remember saying to myself, “*I want to do that*.” We talked drums whenever we saw each other and one day I got a call from him to sub for his reggae band, Jah Spirit. I had never played one note of reggae before, but he assured me I would be fine and that he would get me some charts of the music.

That band ended up being my main band for five or more years while I filled in my open dates with any other band that would call me or my own bands. I did over 200 gigs a year for 10 straight years out of the 25 years I lived in New England. All the while meeting new musicians and getting calls to play for them.

Fast forward to today, and the same thing is still happening. I still keep meeting incredible musicians and end up making music with them: Tim Reed; Gavin Paterniti; Danny Imig; Dave Ahlquist; Joe Glarner; Butch Maybee, who I’ll be playing the Bullfrog Hotel with Jan. 6 with Screamin’ Lou; and so many more.

All these great musicians and diversity of musical styles keep me going. One night I might play classic rock, the next jazz and then the next instro

surf rock.

Some think I'm crazy, but I just cant stop playing the drums; and, more importantly, playing music.

## MARCO SCAPELITTE

Marco Scapelitte is a Jamestown native who first developed his reputation for being an exemplary drummer through his involvement with the Porcelain Busdrivers.

He currently owns Phoenix Rising Wellness Studio, located at 212 Pine St. in Jamestown, and can be seen performing with local group Trip the Deuce and occasionally in open jams at Mojo's Music Bar on Monday evenings. He recently became involved in a new project, which also currently includes local musicians Gavin Paterniti and Adam Gould, that hopes to begin performing by early 2017:

For me, being an introvert with a passion for music and mathematics, I fell in love with the idea of drumming; an act where you can drive the energy of music all while acting from "*behind the curtain,*" so to speak.

Entering the music scene was a blessing because it removed me from my shell and allowed me to make connections with community members and fellow musicians who shared the same passion. When I think back on my time with the Porcelain Busdrivers, it was truly a blessing to part of something special, where week after week you're sharing a moment with the crowd, connecting, letting go and just being present in the energy of the music.

Working with Trip the Deuce has entirely rekindled my love towards creating original music. Whenever you can feel with the same sense of exploration and newness as when you first started, it's an amazing feeling. My current goals for drumming are learning more funk, jazz and

R&B styles; focusing on creating grooves with more subtlety and space.

## NICK CAMPBELL

Nick Campbell is a Warren, Pa., native and current Jamestown resident who has performed in a wide variety of bands throughout the Jamestown, Warren and Erie, Pa., areas. He can currently be seen performing with Qwister, Gasoline Genes and Surprise Guise. He is also currently working on a new, “*secret*” project, writing music with several Jamestown and Buffalo musicians that he hopes to debut next year:

I started playing, just casually, around the age of 14 or 15. I wasn’t serious about practicing or anything at first, but the idea of drumming was something that gave me goosebumps.

Around my junior or senior year in high school, I really started taking a serious approach. I played with a couple buddies so it was easy to just jam and not worry about anything else. Then I kind of dropped off from playing when I was in college, at least my first few years.

When I moved to Erie in 2009, I became completely enamored with practicing as much as possible; anywhere from 4-8 hours a day. Since I have no formal training, I felt that I needed to play catch-up.

My whole concept of drumming is predicated on feel and being aware of what I’m playing. I listen to pretty much every kind of genre of music, so I gather a lot of inspiration that way.

My first official band was a punk-rock ensemble called The Loop. We were based in Erie, and played a few shows around the area. We never had any major aspirations of “*making it.*” More or less, it was about having fun.

I moved to Warren and started a band called Gasoline Genes, and we are

still making music today. One of my biggest sources of creativity comes from playing with that group.

I play in another group called Qwister, which is a reggae-groove oriented band. I have another project in the works called Surprise Guise, which is a jazz-funk fusion trio. I have performed with other acts around the Jamestown area including Smackdab, Sean Lander, Jamie Smith and many, many others.

I have given several tutorials at SoundRhythm Studios with T.R. McKotch, and there is a new, secret project in the works with folks from Jamestown and Buffalo; so keep your eyes and ears open.

The most important thing I've learned is: play as much as you can, whether by yourself or with a group. Always be inspired.

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