

## Preface: 1975

**Wolf Reiter:** I was bartending in the city. One of the partners in the bar, Walter Weiss, owned a huge singles club next to the Amagansett firehouse called Martell's, so I came out here to work. Groupers—people living in group houses—would go Martell's. All the houses in the dunes were full of groupers.

There were six or eight of us bartenders. The customers had to buy two tickets at the door, and they'd give the bartenders a ticket. So we never got tipped. I mean, they just *didn't* tip. I couldn't believe it—they were rich! The girls were only interested in guys with Porsches, BMWs, or Mercedes, and if they were an accountant, a lawyer, or a doctor. All in their late thirties, early forties, all looking to get connected, so they did very little heavy drinking.

I talked to the owner: "We can't do this, we're not making any money. You're going to lose everybody." So he gave us a quarter a ticket, and then we made a lot of money. Fifty cents a person, and seven or eight hundred people a night coming through.

I had never been out here, didn't know anything about the place. I made friends here, and used to come to the Talkhouse to drink when Buddy Pontick and Tony Hughes owned it. They hired me for the next summer and three summers after that.

Back then, the drinking age was 18. It was a great crowd, everybody had fun. There was a jukebox in the corner, a little dance floor, and that was it. It was a small, very charming, cozy little bar. Some of us would come in after the beach at Indian Wells. We'd come in and drink in the late afternoon.

But that wasn't the big scene. The big scene was at night. It was a real big drinking crowd, mainly locals and rich kids. More of the WASP-y set, I guess, is the way to describe it. The girls were beautiful—all blondes. Oh god, you never saw so many good-looking girls. It was always busy, it was fun, everybody was drinking, a great jukebox, hardly ever any fights. Nothing to worry about.

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I was working alone on a Sunday after Labor Day, and Allie and Susan, two friends of mine, were hanging out at the end of the bar. Tony and one or two other people were here.

Three English kids came in. I asked them what they wanted and they said, "We want some American whiskey. We're on our way to New York to get laid, we can't get laid in Montauk."

My girlfriend later said, "Don't you know who that is? That's Mick Jagger!" I didn't recognize him. He was with his brother, Chris, and another Stone—I can't remember who it was. They were staying at Andy Warhol's in Montauk.

They said, "Where are all the girls?"

I said, "It's the Sunday after Labor Day, it's rainy, it's cold. You guys came on the wrong day."

Jagger said to me, “Well, will *you* dance?” He was joking, but I was embarrassed: “No, I’ve got to work, I’m sorry.” I know he was asking in jest, but it was funny. And I *can* say that Mick Jagger asked me to dance.

Tony recognized them. He was Irish, but had an English accent. He said, “Wolf, I want to buy them something: Wilson ‘That’s All’”—Wilson rye, an American liquor, and the phrase on the label is “That’s All.”

He bought them a round, and they ended up sitting at his table, talking. It didn’t get any busier. Finally, I said, “Tony, I’m going to leave. Here’s the Wilson,” and I left. I wasn’t interested. I wanted to get home.

Maybe he was exaggerating when he said he couldn’t get laid in Montauk. But that was the year they wrote “Memory Motel.”

## **Introduction**

**Peter Honerkamp:** I grew up in Douglaston, Queens. When my brother died in a car accident in 1969 with another friend of mine, a lot of his older friends kind of adopted me. It’s interesting, because it’s like my son growing up in a bar with a lot of older male figures. I had that same experience, because when I was 15, a lot of people who were 20 to 23 took me under their wing because they loved my brother.

At that time, those guys in Douglaston went to a new bar in Roslyn called My Father’s Place. Roslyn is probably 15 or 20 minutes outside the Queens line. My Father’s Place used to be

a bowling alley that I bowled at when I was 12 years old. I don't remember the first name of the guy who owned it, but the last name was Lenihan.

When he gave up the bowling alley, his son Jay opened a music club, and he called it My Father's Place. This was the early 1970s.

Jay did whatever he did there, but his partner, Michael "Eppy" Epstein, was really the booker. Eppy got all these *amazing* acts in there. I know the Stones were there. Everybody who was up and coming was there, and in the middle of Roslyn there was this amazing club that they snuck me into a couple of times.

When you walked in there was a bar, and then you walked into a narrow room where there was the music. But he got all these great acts, and they came because it was that kind of place, and it had that kind of cachet.

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**Reg Cornelia:** I grew up in Brooklyn, and I lived in the city a long time. I moved out here about '74, maybe '73, when Buddy Pontick and Tony Hughes owned the Talkhouse.

There was one of the best jukeboxes, a small dance floor, but whatever combination Buddy had really worked. I'm not prone to dancing unless it's my only chance at getting somewhere [laughs], but this place just made you do it. I did the only cartwheel in my life in here. I think tequila had something to do with that.

**Wolf Reiter:** I worked at the Talkhouse for three years, then I got a great job in the city at the Buffalo Roadhouse. After three years there, I opened the Sea Wolf, in East Hampton, in '79.

Back then, every Sunday—my biggest day—I had five bartenders. There were so many people that I started charging at the gates. It had an outdoor barbecue and an outdoor concert every Sunday afternoon. It was packed.

When it slowed up about 10 or 11 in the evening, I'd get my three biggest guys and a Budweiser case and get all the large money from the cash registers, put it in my trunk, and come to Talkhouse and drink and carry on, have a good time, usually realize I needed a ride home, and leave my car here with the money in it. But nothing ever happened.

I met Peter at the Sea Wolf a few years later. He was selling ambulances and fire engines, I think.

**Nick Kraus:** I thought this was a cool story for a long time, and then decided maybe it wasn't so cool, but the night that I was born my father was at the Talkhouse. He'd been at Southampton Hospital earlier, and I guess those were the days when, kid's born at 11:30, let mom and the kid go to bed, and by one o'clock in the morning he was here, apparently handing out cigars because people his age and older used to come up to me and say, "The night you were born, your father gave me a cigar." For a while I thought that was cool, and then realized it's probably why my parents aren't together anymore, because of that kind of behavior.

My grandmother originally met Peter: He was lying on his back on the bar at the old Laundry restaurant on Race Lane. Somebody accused him of having had too much to drink. My

grandmother walked up and said, “Stop what you’re saying. I don’t think he’s had enough.” She was a big drinker herself. That’s how he met my grandparents, and then he met my parents.

So I’ve always been associated with the club. I was always a music fanatic—I worked at Long Island Sound from the time I was 12 years old to early, mid-twenties, at different times and in different capacities. As I became old enough to do something here, I’d always try to get in. I always loved live music.

My parents used to come to the Talkhouse all the time, and they became friendly with Peter, and then he took it over. But before he did, he was selling ambulances. He used to come over, driving the ambulances to my parents’ house. I used to clean them—the outside, not the inside. I guess at the time, they were switching over from the old “Ghostbusters” kind, the Cadillac ambulances, to the box ones. He had all these old Ghostbusters-type ambulances, and my father bought one. He used to drive around to bars and stuff, back in the early Eighties. They talked about buying a Hearse at one point, but I’m not sure that happened.

That was my introduction to Peter Honerkamp. His thirtieth birthday party was at my house. I was at his wedding. When I got older, I got a job at the Talkhouse doing Tuesday night productions. I must have been 21, 22.

**Wolf Reiter:** Peter got married to Marcie. I knew Marcie because I put different artists’ work on the walls in the dining room. She asked if she could put some stuff up, and I said sure. She told me later it was her first show, on the walls of my dining room.

In the winter of ’87, Marcie’s father came to me about booking the Sea Wolf for the wedding. We negotiated, he told me what he needed. I asked for a fifty-percent down payment, and it was because of that down payment that I was able to open—I was so broke that spring.

That was my last year. I think I needed to get a new liquor license. I had the marina for the first seven years along with the restaurant. Then my lease was up and I only had the restaurant, so I didn't have that marina money coming in every winter to open the restaurant.

They had a great wedding—I don't remember much about it so it must have been good.

## One

**Jim Lawler:** I was hitchhiking to Sag Harbor in 1987. All of a sudden this guy came along and picked me up. We started talking, and he said, "I'm going to buy the Talkhouse." I knew the two original owners—I went to school with one of them, Buddy Pontick.

I grew up in this town, so I knew them. I thought, "Wow, how come I didn't know about this?" He said, "Yeah, I'm going to have music."

**Peter Honerkamp:** In the early summer of 1987 the Stephen Talkhouse had been closed because the owners were in litigation with each other. Since it opened as a nightspot in 1970, the Talkhouse always exemplified a hip, wild, but unpretentious place. I had always loved the Talkhouse. It was the best place to drink and the best place to meet women, especially if you weren't looking for someone who was born on third base and thought they hit a triple (not my line).

I had just given up on making it as a novelist, a quest I had pursued for about seven years and 1,700 pages. I hated the job I had.

One night when I was feeling especially low, the writer Clifford Irving asked me if there had ever been anything else I wanted to do. I mentioned owning a bar and he suggested buying the Talkhouse. In that moment I decided to do it.

**Thomas LaGrassa:** My girlfriend at the time—now my wife—and I were walking in front of the Talkhouse, which was in the midst of opening and closing. It was an in-between period, a transition. Peter wasn't on the scene yet.

There was an article on the bulletin board in front. I think it was from *Newsday*. For whatever reason, Jeannie and I stopped and read it. It were about this guy who was friends with Clifford Irving, and how Clifford Irving said, “Wouldn't it be great to die a million dollars in debt?” I remember the quote that first made me think I wanted to meet this guy: “Wouldn't it be great *living* a million dollars in debt?” That was the hook. I remember distinctly saying to Jeannie, I'd like to meet this guy, this sounds pretty cool. It talked about bringing music, and Peter's concept.

**Peter Honerkamp:** It took about five days to raise the money from the original investors. They were Jerome Schneir, my father-in-law at the time; Adrienne Schwartz, my aunt-in-law at the time; her friend Robert Pinto; my new wife, Marcie Schneir, and me. We opened in about two weeks, on or about August 1, 1987.

The first and smartest thing I ever did in business was to drive up to the Sea Wolf, the other great bar of that era, where Larry Wagner was working the door. Larry had done the same in my years as a customer at the Talkhouse. He was the most consistently personable bartender I had ever met and there was no one I was more hopeful would come on board. He did, teaming up



with Michael Gochenour, a.k.a. Frampton, who possessed ample amounts of southern charm and humor as well as good looks.

**Larry Wagner:** I'm from Ridgefield Park, New Jersey. I went to school in Delaware. I played football with Peter Bistran, from one of the families that owned a lot of property out here. Peter brought 14 or 15 of us out one summer. They got us all jobs and we all stayed in a house.

They went back to school, and I was older than them, my eligibility was over. Then I would come out here in the summertime.

**Wolf Reiter:** Larry worked at the Sea Wolf on Sundays. The last year, I got busy Friday and Saturday nights for a reason I never understood. They came to dance, and I didn't want them. I had to hire eight or 10 bouncers. I didn't try to promote it, but I had D.J.s that were playing the kind of music they wanted, so I got what I deserved.

**Larry Wagner:** I worked the back parking lot. I was the Five Dollar Man: I collected five dollars at the Talkhouse on Friday and Saturday, and the same people would see me in the parking lot on Sunday. They called me the Five Dollar Man.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Phillip Vega, the unflappable, ever-friendly and ever-oblivious Puerto Rican, was one of my next important free-agency acquisitions. I got him from the Sea Wolf, which was run by the ever distracted but always good-humored Wolf Reiter.

**Wolf Reiter:** Phillip came out here because I hired Jose, who was a chef at some well-known restaurants in the city. Jose was a very good chef. I told him to make the first Caribbean menu out here. We came up with funny names for the dishes. He died, years ago, of brain cancer.

Jose was from the Bronx, and he brought Phillip and two other friends from the Bronx with him, and they worked as dishwashers and porters at the Sea Wolf. I had a pretty well staffed kitchen with Jose and his three friends.

**Phil Vega:** I was born in Puerto Rico, in a small town called Mayagüez. I got to New York at the age of three or four. I grew up in the Bronx. Went to school in the Bronx. Then I bumped into this guy named Wolf Reiter. I was working at Café Luxembourg in the city, and Wolf invited me out here. He was looking for two guys to come help close his restaurant, the Sea Wolf. I came out here in October, was supposed to just be here for two months, and decided to stay.

**Wolf Reiter:** I gave Phillip and his two friends a little speech one day: “You don’t have to go back to the Bronx, you can make it out here.” And two of them did. After that summer, Phillip ended up working for Peter. He made it great, everybody loves him. The next year, when I was in a bind or anything, Phillip would come right over and help, even though he still had to work fulltime at Talkhouse.

**Phil Vega:** Larry and Debbie Kennedy were the first two that taught me how to bartend. They had started teaching me how to make margaritas, and I had to drink every margarita I made wrong. This went on and on and on, to four or five o’clock in the morning, even later. I went upstairs and passed out.

Larry came knocking on the door, “Hey Phil, you got to help me out, clean the bar downstairs!” This was five, six o’clock. I was like, “No, no, no.” Then we “choosed” it out, we did the odd finger, and he lost.

The first drink I ever made was a Dewers on the rocks. I was worried about the Dewers on the rocks because I didn't know what the hell was "Dewar's." It used to say "White Label" in big letters, it never said "Dewar's."

Every five or 10 minutes, I would come back to the guy, and was like, "Hey, how's your drink?"

He said, "Relax, don't worry about it. Everything's okay."

Then I'd come back again: "How's your drink? Everything's okay?"

And he was like, "Why are you coming over to me?"

"Well, I'm only serving beers over here, you're the only one that I made a . . . This is the first drink I ever made."

He said, "You know what? Here you go. Keep that and leave me alone. Don't ask me again."

**Peter Honerkamp:** It was from Wolf that I briefly snagged Kevin Finnegan, who had worked at the Talkhouse since the 1970s.

**Wolf Reiter:** He was an Irish bartender, very charming. He could do *The New York Times* crossword puzzle faster than anybody I ever knew. Sharp. He used to be an advertising copywriter.

Kevin said, "Can I work at Talkhouse?" Peter says I told Kevin he couldn't because I didn't want him drawing my customers away. It's possible. I didn't always make the best decisions. But he worked at the Talkhouse also, I guess. At a certain point, I was going to pay

Peter to take him, because once he was so drunk he almost dropped the cash register on my foot. We were moving it and he couldn't even hold it. I got so mad.

All the workers from the Talkhouse would come to the Sea Wolf, and all the workers at my place would come to the Talkhouse. We'd spend all the money we made at one place at the other. But it was great.

**Peter Honerkamp:** In the ever-changing world of the too-often snobbish Hamptons nightlife, we were to become a welcome institution.

## **Two: 1987**

**Peter Honerkamp:** I don't know if My Father's Place consciously played into what happened at the Talkhouse. I could be misremembering it. But I can tell you when I was sitting in that car with Clifford Irving and he said "Buy that bar," the Talkhouse was not a music bar.

Did I want to get that far, right then and there, to make it a music bar? Absolutely not. But Klyph Black, my cousin at the time and one of the best guitarists out here, and Eddie Mac wanted to do an acoustic thing, like they did at Snugglers Cove.

**Klyph Black:** Born in Brooklyn, I grew up in Westbury, Long Island. I've been coming out here since the Sixties with my mom. I moved out here permanently in 2005, but I've been coming out here forever.

My mom's brother was Peter's father-in-law. I met Peter through Marcie, my cousin and Peter's wife. He bought it with a bunch of other people; I knew him right before then.

I played at Snugglers Cove. This guy Monty Farber, a writer and great musician from out here, had the gig. I took it over after he put a band together and the band was too big to play in the club. So he split and I got the gig.

It was just me, originally. Slowly but surely, I added people. My friend Jeff came in and played electric bongos, and it was just the two of us. Then we added a bass player, and then a guitar player. We didn't really care about it being small. It was really tight, but we ended up being two guitars, bass, drums and harmonica. Eddie MacNeil was the harmonica player.

I think I was the first person to play at Talkhouse. Rumor Has It started playing here, but originally it was just me and Mac. We did the acoustic thing, and the band grew out of that. Rumor Has It started playing here and became the house band.

**Peter Honerkamp:** The first musicians to grace the Talkhouse were Klyph and Eddie Mac, with Klyph on guitar and Eddie blowing the harp. They played together one night in September 1987. Their band, Rumor Has It, was to follow sometime that fall. That band became a fixture, the ultimate house band, for the next 10 years. It featured John Baker on bass, Jeff Silverman a.k.a. Pepto on drums, and Peter Michne a.k.a. Bosco, an amazing guitar player who has graced the Talkhouse stage more than anyone but the porter.

**Peter "Bosco" Michne:** There was a place where we used to play down the road, Snugglers Cove. That's where I met Klyph. Talkhouse was here, but it was a lot smaller, and Peter didn't own it.

When Snugglers closed down at one or two o'clock, we would come down here for one more beer. There was a jukebox in the corner. I met Peter through Klyph, I guess, when the

Talkhouse opened. The stage was *really* small. But it always sounded good in here. That's where the whole musical Amagansett scene started.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Shortly after Klyph and Eddie started playing weekly, two friends of mine, Georgeanne Roberts and Ali Cole, put me in touch with the bluesman John Hammond. John had lived in East Hampton for years. I had met him at Georgie's earlier that year and he agreed to play that October.

**Ken Rafferty:** We were friends with John Hammond, he was our neighbor in East Hampton—our backyard was their backyard. Peter wanted to start getting some name bands in there. Ali said, "Let me speak to John Hammond."

**Peter Honerkamp:** I went to the agent and they wanted \$750. I could have negotiated, but John had a line he told me once: "If you cry about a nickel you'll die about a dime." I think it was a line from Robert Johnson ["Last Fair Deal Gone Down"]. I paid him \$750, and that's how it started. We charged \$10 and the place was mobbed. John became a fixture at the Talkhouse in the early years. With his show, the concept of bringing national talent to the tiny Talkhouse was born.

**Ken Rafferty:** John and Peter had a talk, and John told Peter, "Here's my agent, contact him and he'll set you up. He's got a list of bands that travel the whole east coast. These guys need places just like this. They might be working Hempstead, they'll come out and work here."

**Peter Honerkamp:** Other acts that fall included the bluesman Mose Allison, the folksinger Eliza Gilkyson, folk trio Uncle Bonsai (with the classic "Boys Like Sex In The

Morning”), with many others coming to play. Late-night bands followed the national acts on weekends.

Taj Mahal played on a Wednesday night in January, our first \$20 ticket, and it seemed like everyone in town was there. The crowd was totally silent and mesmerized. Taj played three more times that year and his were among the most beloved and best-attended performances of the early years. The proceeds of one of those shows went to the Retreat, an organization that helps victims of domestic violence. That was the first of a long line of charity benefits we've held over the years. We're honored to be in a position to help people who need help in our community.

**Phil Vega:** Taj Mahal was the first really big act. He used to sing this song called “Squat That Rabbit,” talking about women.

**Dee Moore:** Taj Mahal played solo back then, half the show on the piano and the other on guitar. He'd take offense if the quiet was broken during his performance. After the show he'd grab a drink and put quarters in the jukebox—that's how long ago—and we'd dance.

**Thomas LaGrassa:** My mother, may she rest in peace, was a little black in her soul. She loved the blues, loved Taj Mahal. We had great seats, and the stage was even smaller then. I remember Taj Mahal dedicating “Big Legged Mamas are Back in Style Again” to my mother. He was so sweet on the way out, flirting with my mother, and it was all because he saw that we were in Peter's friendly group.

**Peter Honerkamp:** In early February 1988, I wrote a letter to Billy Joel, inviting him and his then-wife, Christie Brinkley, to come to a show and saying how we'd love it if he'd come in and play. My friends thought that was pushing it. Billy and Christie showed up at a Loudon Wainwright III show that month.

**Loudon Wainwright III:** I think John Hammond Jr. was the first of what you'd call a national act to play here. But I was pretty much right behind him. Considering that I used to play here twice a year and have been playing here for at least 25 years, it's safe to say I've played here 40 times. I don't think a year has gone by that I haven't.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Richie Havens played his first show on a cold night in February, the only time he would ever perform with a band. Richie would return for the next 22 years, but always played solo.

This was before the Stephen Talkhouse expanded. We had a stage that was about six feet deep by eight feet long at the time. The mixer was a six-channel board that Klyph operated from the side of the stage, squeezed in by the patrons around him.

**Klyph Black:** A Toa six-channel mixer. It was actually a pretty good mixer, considering. I had a Peavey four-channel high-impedance amp with two Acoustic monitors. It was very funny—that was the whole PA. It was really, *really* primitive: two Toa speakers and two little monitors. I think we had an Alesis MicroVerb—a reverb unit—and there was reverb in the head, too.

**Peter Honerkamp:** But, remarkably in retrospect, it worked. People were able to see great talent, close up, and if the prices were steeper than in New York City you were still seeing



them in a venue no bigger than some living rooms. And you didn't have to drive to New York and pay for parking. Perhaps most important, you could go into a show and know a significant number of people in the audience. You were watching a great show with your friends. I believe that's one reason the audience vibe, and hence the artist's response, is as good as it is here.

**Klyph Black:** We graduated from that to a 12-channel Yamaha board with JBL speakers and monitors, then to a 24-channel board, and added some effects.

**Drew Holshouser:** It was unavoidable that the technology of the room was going to have to ramp up to the level of a real, professional venue. It couldn't exist as a two-monitor mix from a console. It was bigger than that.

Now, we have 40 channels at front of house, 40 channels of monitors. Six monitor mixes with the ability to do eight without a problem. In a 175-seat club, that kind of flexibility is pretty unheard of. Stage-side monitors, the whole bit. It's the real thing. It's a little tiny club, but it's a real music venue.

### **Three**

**Peter Honerkamp:** There were some memorable nights that first year. They included a Jesse Colin Young show, April 1988. Three middle-aged, intoxicated local women arrived early for the show. They sat at a reserved table and refused to leave. It took a while but we finally got two of them out the door. The third begged to be allowed to stay. She professed that she had had a crush on Jesse for over 20 years and just had to see him. I warned her she had to keep quiet and sit at the bar. Finally, the show began.

I retreated to the outside bar only to hear Jesse sing about three words before stopping and saying, "Peter, this just isn't going to work." Panicked, I raced in to see the lady kneeling at his side and clutching at him. Loud enough for everyone to hear she pleaded, "*But I blew him at Woodstock,*" as I pulled her off him.

Jesse leaned into the microphone and reminded us all, "*It wasn't me, Miss. I wasn't at Woodstock.*"

We got her up and out the back, then escorted her down the driveway that used to run up the east side of the building (where the stage and bathrooms are now). She stumbled away into the night. As I walked back up the alley I could hear Jesse start playing. At that point, the latch on the window directly behind the stage snapped, the window crashed down, the wind blew into the club on Jesse's back, and again he stopped playing.

I went over and lifted the window up, then realized I had to stay there and hold it up as the latch had snapped off. If I let it go the show would stop again, and there was nothing to prop the window up. So there I was, holding up the window on a cold night, in full view of the audience inside, as Jesse finally started playing again.

Guess who came back down the street and started screaming and punching me, claiming I had stolen her earring? The audience started laughing, and Jesse stopped playing. All ended well when we finally got rid of the boozette, propped up the window with a stick, and the show went on.

## Four

**Michael Cain:** I had a low lottery number, enlisted in the Navy Seabees in 1970. I was in Vietnam, Mobile Construction Battalion 3: “We Build, We Fight, Can Do!” Yes, I served my country.

The reason I came up here in '86: Bill Barrett, a highly successful sculptor from New York City, hired me to help him fabricate pieces for a few months. I'd met him through another sculptor from New Orleans who had a show. They'd give me their mockettes and I'd blow them up to whatever size, paint them and install them, all that stuff.

I came up to help him out. We got along so well that he said could I stick around for a year. So I helped him build a show that he had in the spring of '87 at the Kouros Gallery.

Bill Barrett's got a place in Santa Fe and still has his place on Worth Street in the city. It was awesome, it was such a great time, coming in and having a place to stay. Great studio, great time, great people.

I had been dating Miss Rodeo Oklahoma [laughs]. I came out here in August, and Bill Durham, a friend of Bill Barrett's, let us stay at his place. He had some rentals in Amagansett, and had for many years. So the rodeo queen got to see a little bit of what was happening out here. I couldn't persuade her to get away—she liked her horses in Oklahoma. She rode off into the sunset, and I stayed.

Then Ruth Vered Gallery introduced me to Elizabeth De Cuevas, and she hired me to fabricate a bunch of work for her, so that's how I stuck around here. In the summer of '86, I did some sculpture for Phyllis Newman that she needed work done on. I was working for Elizabeth

de Cuevas too, building her sculpture. I was meeting a lot of people, and it was great. I was going to go to Italy, but I met enough people that I decided to stay here.

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It was the weirdest thing. I had worked at Oceans in the summer of '87. Robert Pinto, who was a part owner of the Talkhouse at that time, used to come in and out of there. He was deaf—he had these hearing aids, but he was basically deaf.

When we'd heard the Talkhouse had opened under new management, a bunch of us went down there. We went in and I saw Wags [Larry Wagner], I think Kevin Finnegan, and may have met Peter, I don't remember.

The spring of '88, I was sitting in Estia with the owner—he's not around anymore. He was saying, "Mike, where are you gonna work this summer?"

I said, "This new place, the Talkhouse, opened up, I'm thinking about going to work over there." Not two minutes later, in walked Peter Honerkamp.

Peter and said, "Are you Mike Cain?"

"Yeah."

"We're having an employee meeting this afternoon at three. Would you like to come down? I'd like to talk to you about being a doorman."

I said, "Sure, that sounds great." He was walking out, and the Estia owner and I were just looking at each other—we couldn't believe what had just happened. So I went in at three and he

introduced me as the new doorman! “I’d like you to meet Mike, he’s going to be our new doorman.” Okay, I guess I’m the doorman here.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Michael arrived for his job interview wearing a long black coat and a tie. He began the interview by assuring me he would never drink on the job. I told him I couldn't hire him. He asked why. "You wouldn't fit in," I replied.

"I can drink on the job," he assured me. And he was right.

**Michael Cain:** I had a tie on, and kind of a suit—doorman shit—and of course, everyone was looking at me like, “Who the fuck is this guy?” A lot of the people didn’t know who I was because I came from Oklahoma. That was April 6 of ’88, Taj Mahal. I think it was \$30 or \$35 to get in.

It was awesome to see Taj Mahal. In 1976, I was in a band in Oklahoma City—I play congas—and we played a gig with Taj Mahal. I think it was called the Sooner Theater, in Norman, Oklahoma. We were the warm-up band. He kind of barely remembered me.

## **Five: 1988**

**Michael Cain:** The next night, April 7 or something, it was Buddy Guy and Junior Wells. This was my second night! I had people come up, like Mary Gardiner, “Mr. Mary.” She’s from the Gardiner family, whatever. We called her Mr. Mary for certain reasons. She grabbed my tie and I thought she was gonna choke me: “What do you mean, it’s \$35? I’ve never had to pay to get in here!” She was stroking my tie.

I said, “Hey, I don’t know you, get your hands off my tie, it’s 35 bucks,” or whatever it was.

**Peter “Bosco” Michne:** The bathroom used to be near where the front-of-house mixer is now. One night I came in and Buddy Guy was playing. I went to open the bathroom door and he, like, leapt out with this in-your-face, rock-star pose. That was a good memory—guitar hero pops out of the men’s room. He had a long, long cord, and he had a valet that would roll the cord out behind him.

**Michael Cain:** Buddy Guy was just off the charts. He went to the bar while he was playing and poured himself a brandy. He had this little guy that was feeding the line. He went out in the middle of the street. He had the guy feeding the cord, and he was standing in the middle of the road, and now people were wanting to come out, they had drinks in their hands, and we were not supposed to let anybody out with a cocktail. What the fuck do you do when the whole bar is unloading? Fuck it, what are they gonna do?

Some girl was getting in her car to leave, and he got in the car with her! Playing the guitar! You can hear this inside the club, and he was in the car doing his thing.

**Phil Vega:** It was my day off—I was living upstairs at the time—and the only things I heard were drums, bass and horns. I didn’t hear any more guitar! I came down, and the whole crowd was outside in the middle of the street. Buddy was out in the middle of the street playing with the whole crowd outside! The cops came and said, “You’re going to have to take this inside, everybody back inside.”

I was hanging up on the roof watching as he got into this Corvette and drove away! And you could hear, little by little, how the guitar muffled out, but the band was still playing. Maybe he went back to the hotel room?

I found out later on that he went down to the beach, but he was still playing in the car! And they drove him back, and by the time he was getting over here, you could hear the guitar again! Everybody went running back outside. He pulled up and walked right back onstage. He kept on playing and playing. It was great.

**Michael Cain:** It was just such great times. I love the blues, and I played with a number of people. I sat in with a number, and saw a lot of people that aren't around anymore, like Roy Buchanan.

## Six

**Peter Honerkamp:** Roy Buchanan played the Talkhouse only once, on a Sunday night in late June of 1988. It was a \$20 ticket and the man who turned down the Rolling Stones (after they approached him to play in the band after the death of Brian Jones) was trying to get his alcohol-derailed career on track with a new album on Alligator Records.

In those days of the early shows, I made a practice of greeting every artist, asking if everything was okay, and assuring them I was the biggest fan of their music in the world, regardless of whether I knew their music or not. That role has since been absorbed by other sycophants or staff who just plain care. Anyway, I bounded up the stairs, ready to tell Roy just

how much I really loved him, and froze the moment I met his cold black eyes staring at me. This was not a man who wanted to chat. I paid him, said nothing, and went downstairs.

**Phil Vega:** This was before the stage was built—it was still the small, little stage. Roy got off the stage and went into the crowd. He sat down, and he had a lady strum the guitar while he was playing the neck. That was a great moment.

Later on in the evening, someone threw a pair of panties up on him. It was great! It was a lot of fun.

**Peter Honerkamp:** There were probably 50 paying customers and 20 comps that night with more drifting in as one of *the* best shows that ever occurred here unfolded. A drummer, a bass player that looked 12 and acted 30, and Roy just wailing away. He did a Hendrix classic I can't remember and "Crossroads" and went upstairs. The place went wild.

In those days, I didn't know to check with the band to *see* if they had a cutoff to their encores, so I let the crowd go five minutes or more. Then I ran around the club and upstairs and faced those same black eyes, this time bisected by a joint held between them.

"Ummm, is there any chance you could play one more song?" I asked, like I was trying to get a kiss after my first date (actually, even worse).

"I would," he said, with unexpected softness. "But I make it a point never to play after I smoke."

"I mean, I'm willing to pay, I, err...."

Before Roy could answer, the adolescent bass player piped in. "How much?"



“Five hundred dollars,” I said. Understand, I couldn’t look into those eyes and say less than that. But that was \$500 to a band playing for \$2,000.

“Roy, we gotta take it,” the bass player insisted, stepping forward.

Well let me tell you, if I thought I had seen a withering stare earlier that day, I knew nothing. Buchanan glared at the kid until he stepped back, and slowly and methodically ground out the joint.

“You still don’t know anything about the blues,” he said dryly. “If a man in a joint this small, in a room that empty, paying you this much already, asks you for one more song you do it for free.” He got up and went downstairs, band in tow, and played 45 minutes more. He didn’t take a dime.

I thanked him when he left, he nodded, and two weeks later he was arrested for public intoxication somewhere in Virginia. He was found hanged by his belt in jail. I never saw eyes like that and that gesture, as much as any other made by the performers here, is with me today.

## **Seven: Collins’ Shuffle**

**Peter Honerkamp:** Albert Collins first played the Talkhouse on the first Saturday in June 1988 with his band, the Icebreakers. The ticket price was \$35—\$15 more than we had charged to date—and both Jann Wenner and Jimmy Buffett were in the crowd. The Master of the Telecaster played forever and, like Buddy Guy that April, went outside and played guitar on the street.

**Klyph Black:** I got to play with Albert Collins, which was really cool. That was unbelievable to me, that I actually got to sit in with him.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Before the show Albert had learned how new we were and also that a then-unknown (though not to him) band called Little Charlie & the Nightcats were playing the next night—for \$5. He had an off-day the next day and announced from the stage that he'd be sticking around to play with Little Charlie & the Nightcats, one of innumerable great gestures the artists playing here have made to their fans over the years. Albert played for free and the place was packed.

**Charles Baty:** Our first record had come out, so it was our first major tour. It might have been the band's second tour, but that was our first time to actually get out of California and Oregon. We had done a record-release party with Albert in San Francisco.

**Rick Estrin:** As I recall, it was the second time we had met Albert. We'd opened for him in San Francisco shortly after we got signed to Alligator. He was just really nice, "Welcome to the family" and all this stuff—he was on Alligator at the time.

It was the first time we ever went to Long Island. We were a new act with a brand new album out. Albert had played there the night before. We had never been there, and probably nobody even knew who the hell we were.

At his show, Albert announced that he was going to stay over, stick around and come to our show and sit in. He encouraged people to come to our show.

**Charles Baty:** We played Stephen Talkhouse on a Sunday night and Albert had played on the previous night. Then he stayed over an extra night just to hang out. He came down and played a couple sets with us. We were blown away that he would do that.

**Rick Estrin:** He ended up playing the whole second set with us, also Soko Richardson, his drummer, and his sax player—I wish I could remember his name, he was a good guy. But it helped us immensely. It got us an automatic crowd, and after that night we'd always do well.

**Michael Cain:** Albert Collins's band was a lot of fun. They came a number of times. He was so loud!

**Charles Baty:** One funny thing happened that night. At that point the Talkhouse was a lot smaller. There was somebody sitting right next to his amplifier. I guess the guy, some fan, decided that Albert was playing a little too loud. He was turning down Albert's amp—Albert didn't know that—and Albert's whole sound was to have the amp way up high, to get that sustain and everything. When Albert finally caught him doing that, oh, he just lost it. He really yelled at the guy.

**Rick Estrin:** He was *pissed*, man! I used to see Albert Collins when I was a kid—he would come to different places. He looked like a real evil guy, but when you got to know him a little bit, he was the sweetest, nicest guy in the world. That's the only time I ever saw him get pissed at somebody. It was such close quarters, that the guy could do that—the stage was much smaller then, too—but Albert had a great stage presence.

**Charles Baty:** When I first came in there, I found it hard to believe that Albert Collins had been playing there the night before, but then I noticed that they were able to charge a higher

cover there than a lot of other places, and realized that was part of the whole thing—you paid a premium to be up close and personal to these stars.

When we first started the whole thing, Peter really believed in us. We had no draw, he had to build our name. He really worked hard at doing that. He couldn't afford to give us hotels at first, and we couldn't afford the hotels out in the Hamptons. Sometimes we slept on the floor at his house.

The first time we slept on his floor, right before we turned off the lights somebody said, "By the way, I have pet ferrets." I got a little nervous about that.

**Rick Estrin:** That was a little freaky. It makes a good illustration—for the last 20 years I would never *consider* staying on somebody's floor and having ferrets sniffing you. But at the time, I guess, it seemed like the thing to do.

**Charles Baty:** But we got to know Peter, and he was always a great supporter of the music, would always come out and say hi. Eventually he was buying us hotel rooms—we'd always wanted our own hotel rooms—taking care of our food, doing all this stuff. He treated us like stars, and we appreciated that.

Every time we finished, a big burly bartender would have a Grey Goose martini with three olives waiting next to my amplifier. He would bring it up the second I was done. You really felt like you were in a special place.

**Rick Estrin:** It was an exciting time for us. Stephen Talkhouse was an odd little place, but it was just cool. Long Island is a trip—I had never been there before. It's a whole different vibe than California or Chicago. It was fun.

**Charles Baty:** In the early days, there was this one guy, I don't remember his name, I think it was John. He was a fan, and he dressed a little like Elvis did in the Fifties—the pomp and all that stuff. The guy would come down with his girlfriend every time we played. He would get up and dance a certain way to each song. It was like the audience became part of the show.

**Rick Estrin:** The movie actor Peter Boyle used to come see us all the time. He was such a nice guy. For a while, every time he was there he'd be wearing a Little Charlie t-shirt. He was a fan of the band.

I can remember standing on the sidewalk in front of Talkhouse after soundcheck, talking with Peter, and some women walked by and were like, “Oooh, Peter Boyle!” He was very nice to them, and then he said, “Do you know Rick Estrin? It's a great band, you should come to the show tonight.” Just a super-nice guy—there was no reason that he needed to do that, he was just being a good guy.

One thing I remember—this is kind of messed up. We were playing, and Billy Joel and Christie Brinkley were sitting right in front, almost in the center. They were there for the whole first show. The Talkhouse had a patio out back with a bar, and maybe even served food there. Billy went out there and puked. I hope it wasn't the music . . . .

**Peter Honerkamp:** The Collins show was a big hit and Albert, like so many acts that would follow, fell in love with the place, its vibe, and the staff. He would be a Talkhouse fixture for several years.

Little Charlie has been playing here since (for \$45 now), but if it wasn't for Albert they never would have established the fan base as quickly. That show exposed the East End to a great band that has since become a fixture.

By the way, when Jann Wenner and Jimmy Buffett came to see Albert Collins, they told me to set up the TV in the corner so patrons could see the acts if they were blocked in over there. It only took me 16 years to get around to doing that.

### **Eight: There's Room For All of Us (1988)**

**Peter Honerkamp:** I am guessing as I am on all these dates, but I believe it was July 14, 1988, and I believe it was a Thursday that the band of bands, Terrance Simien & the Mallet Playboys, first played the Talkhouse. As much as I am ignorant of music and music genres, I'm sure there wasn't one in 20 people that came in who knew what zydeco was. And most that did knew it from seeing their cameo appearance in the movie *The Big Easy*. After Terrance and the boys came to play that night, lots of Amagansett knew.

**Terrance Simien:** The first gig I did out there was a wedding, actually. Before I played Talkhouse, I did a wedding, and we had played the Sea Wolf. That was '85 or '86.

**Wolf Reiter:** Somebody called me from Shreveport—somebody had referred him to me—and said, “My friend Terrance is going to be up there for a wedding. We know you have a good music crowd—you'll want to book him, he's great.” I said sure, as long as it fits my budget. Because his friend called me, I booked him, and I booked him every chance I could after that. Terrance is a great guy, really a nice guy, and I love his music.

**Terrance Simien:** Then the next year we came back and did Talkhouse. But *man*, that place can be intimidating for a country boy. You see all these big houses, and all these almost-million-dollar cars on the road! Whoa!

But you never got that feeling when you walked into the Talkhouse. I don't care who you were at the bar with, it could have been a poor man, a rich man—you're just chilling out, all on the same level.

**Michael Cain:** I just loved Terrance Simian. He's the Mick Jagger of zydeco. The guy's just got so much energy, I had so much fun with that guy, and still do. I've seen him in New Orleans a few times.

**Terrance Simien:** Jim Lawler was our sound engineer, that first night. This is how we met: the guy that did sound didn't show up, I think, so Peter said, "I need you to do sound."

**Jim Lawler:** Somebody else was supposed to do it. All of a sudden, Peter didn't have anybody. He said, "I need a soundman." And I said, "Oh sure, I can do it." I had never done sound. The PA was just one little unit over in the corner.

It was the first gig where things had to be miked—not just vocals. I had done *that*, with a simple PA. This was brand new, but I was thinking, "This has got to be easy. This isn't the *really* big time." Meanwhile, Terrance has played stages where they mic everything. We were trying to sneak by, and I was trying to make a hundred bucks.

**Terrance Simien:** We'd played smaller places, but at the time we first played there we had just gotten off the road with Los Lobos, back when "La Bamba" was on the charts.

Jim said, "I don't know sound." He didn't know *shit* about doing sound! Shit would feed back, I'd look at him, and he'd throw up his hands, "I'm sorry! I don't know what I'm doing!"

**Jim Lawler:** Terrance said, “Is there a soundman in the house?” I said something like, “No, he’s in the bathroom,” something to duck out of it. He had an accordion and it was feeding back, and I didn’t know what the hell was going on.

**Peter Honerkamp:** The soundboard was *not on*.

**Terrance Simien:** But we made it through the night, and it was a beautiful night. Every time we see each other we laugh about it. It was a trip.

**Jim Lawler:** Afterward, he was totally cool. We laughed about it for a long time. Then, finally, the sound moved out in front. For a long time it was over on the side because the stage was so small.

**Terrance Simien:** We always tease him about that—me and Jim are close friends, they come visit me in Louisiana. The last Jazz Fest, we jammed, we turned the crowd out.

We started hanging with everybody at the Talkhouse, and immediately you had this feeling of family. For us, Long Island could be the furthest thing. The whole atmosphere couldn’t be more different, but the love those people bring to their job and presenting the show, it’s like nowhere else. And how many number-one places like that have survived as long, and in that area? It’s got to be hard like hell to keep a venue like that open. It’s got to be a pressure cooker. Not many have survived, but they have the same staff, the same group. It’s magic, man, and words can’t really describe it. People have to experience it for themselves.

**Peter Honerkamp:** With Tiny Earl on washboards and Terrance on accordion both in and out of the club, I can still remember Ence Baxter and Linda dancing in the streets with Michael Cain. Paul Simon, Lorne Michaels and others were there. In the 50-odd appearances that



Terrance and the Mallet Playboys have played since, here and in Florida, there is no performer I consider as good a person or a better friend.

**Phil Vega:** Terrance Simien has played here so many times, it's incredible. Every time he would come here, I always wanted to get onstage with him, and I'd fool around with the washboard. Peter would get up there. One time the whole staff was up there with him, throwing beads out, having a great time.

**Terrance Simien:** A lot of times we play Talkhouse, we'll come in a day or two before, hang with some friends. I've seen Richie Havens, Dave Mason, Roger McGuinn, I can't think of them all. Maybe Taj Mahal once. Man, oh man, what a place to see people like that. It's one of those jaw-dropping experiences. You just can't believe it. Then they start playing these songs you grew up listening to! "Wow, this is really happening!" It's such a rare thing that legends like that would be on that level with the people. Just hanging out, telling stories. Everybody I've seen play Talkhouse seemed to be happier than hell to be there. It's just that kind of place.

I can remember being star-struck through the whole thing, feeling the vibe, and I'm sure the crowd is the same way. For the past 33 years I've had my band and been seeing stuff like that, but never like *that*. I remember people coming to hear us! One night Billy Joel, one night Jennifer Hudson. Lorne Michaels used to bring a bunch of people—once he had Chevy Chase, Steve Martin and Paul Simon. "What are y'all doing in here?!" But that was their hangout, they were just going out like anybody else. That's the magic of the place.

**Joann Pauley:** Terence Simien comes for the Talkhouse birthday party and he always has a good time.

**John Hynan:** For one of the Talkhouse birthdays, Joann got a big square cake with the picture of Stephen Talkhouse on it. That's the one they gave to Terrance Simien—he held it up. That was cool.

**Terrance Simien:** I remember that! I think they have a photo of that in the Talkhouse amongst all the others.

**Jim Lawler:** Terrance has proven over and over that he is a master, not only of entertainment and songwriting and delivery of a tradition, but also of education. Trying to educate people to the importance of the zydeco, that Cajun and Creole influence—there's a difference between the two.

He is like a lot of the artists that Peter got—world renowned in their own ways, and most of them used to much bigger stages than we had.

**Marc Broussard:** It is really cool to walk into a place and see guys on the wall that I grew up down the road from. Buckwheat Zydeco lives a mile from my house, and Tab Benoit is right down the road, we hang out sometimes.

There's another guy on the wall all over the place, they love him here, called Terrance Simian, that's a good friend of mine as well. That was one of the coolest things that I remember about being at the Talkhouse: seeing pictures of guys I grew up listening to.

**Terrance Simien:** Every time you go to Talkhouse something crazy happens! But it's crazy in a good way, and every experience is different. Every time we go, we get so excited, the whole band. We're riding, talking about what we did last time, planning what we are going to do

this time. And when we leave, that's the one place where everybody's saying, "Shit, I don't know how these guys do it! Shit, we left just in time because we'd have overdone it!"

But it's all in a good way, the energy, hanging out, having fun, taking a little drink. It's the perfect way to escape to a place you wish the whole world was like.

## Nine

**Peter Honerkamp:** Lots of vignettes fill the visual mental landscape of that first year: A bombed Buddy Guy stumbling past Mick Jagger waiting to greet him at the front door, then hearing that he was there and playing "Satisfaction" after Mick had already left.

**Phil Vega:** Mick Jagger has been here, there's a picture—if it's still around here—of him. He was sitting in this banquette in the corner.

**Ron Rafferty:** Eddie McKnight was a bartender at McKendry's and sometimes, a soundman, doorman, and bartender at the Talkhouse.

One night he was working the door with me. Me and Timmy Meyers took a 15-minute break or whatever. We came back and I saw Ed telling this guy, "I can't let you in, you're too fucked up. I just can't, it's against the law, I'll get in trouble."

As I looked at the guy, I realized it was Ron Wood. I stopped Ed and said, "Come here for a second. Do you know who this is?"

"I don't care who it is. He's fucked up and he's not coming in this bar!"

I said, “Ed, that’s Ron Wood from the Rolling Stones. He’s been that fucked up since ’68, dude. He ain’t getting any better, you’ve got to let him in.”

Timmy had to actually get Ed away from the door, he wasn’t going to let him in.

**Peter Honerkamp:** My deaf partner leading the blind Doc Watson to the stage. Loudon Wainwright III playing, to an ever-so-silent audience, his tribute to John Lennon called “Not John” on a frigid February night. The moment when Roger McGuinn first blasted out "Mr. Tambourine Man" on a Sunday night in July.

**Klyph Black:** I got to play with Roger McGuinn too. My band at the time, Kings County, was playing here. We were playing here after—the early show was Roger McGuinn. We were rehearsing/sound-checking. Roger was coming, and I was doing sound for him.

Roger was supposed to be here at three o’clock, so we had an hour. We were up there, messing around. He walked in the club and sat at the bar, listening to us. We stopped, and he said, “No, keep playing, do your thing.” In that band, I happened to play a Rickenbacker 12-string, and he said, “Hey, that’s a nice guitar.”

I said, “You ought to know!”

He sat and listened to us, and after he heard us, he asked if we would back him up on his encore. So we did four songs—“Rock ’n’ Roll Star,” “Feel a Whole Lot Better” and two Bob Dylan songs. That was great, to play with him. It was amazing—two 12-strings. Pretty big sounding.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Drinking champagne with Donovan at 3 a.m. (his show had ended at 10 p.m.) on an August night while his stepson played “Wild Horses,” then learning his stepson’s natural father had been Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones.

**Michael Cain:** Donovan! First time I saw Donovan I couldn’t believe it! There was Donovan, and Kathleen Turner and Jann Wenner’s wife, I think her name is Jane, they came in to see Donovan. Because it was Kathleen Turner, what the fuck, you’ve got to let them in. I said, “What would you ladies like to drink?”

“Margaritas.” I went to Wags and got them.

Donovan was playing “Hurdy Gurdy Man” and all this shit, and it was blowing my mind, taking me in the way-back machine. Then I noticed that Kathleen needed another one, so I said, “Kathleen, would you like another?” She said, “Well, sure.” It was Kathleen Freakin’ Turner! There she was, and she was freakin’ gorgeous. I got her another one. And then Jann Wenner’s wife was saying, “I’ll have another one,” and I just looked at her and said, “Hey, you ain’t no Kathleen Turner.”

**Larry Wagner:** Kathleen Turner was influential here. She was chairwoman of a retreat for battered women.

It was \$20 for the charity. At the same time one year, Billy Joel was playing somewhere else, and it was \$100. But Kathleen Turner passed it around that Billy Joel was playing here, and people were coming willing to pay \$100. The first 10 people at the door had a hundred dollars, because that’s what they expected. We ran out of change, because they handed the doorman hundred-dollar bills, thinking Billy Joel is going to play.

At the end of the night they'd lay it on us—it's our fault, we'd been passing it around that Billy Joel was going to play. But Billy Joel usually did play, he was very good.

**Steve Day:** This is the anti-Hamptons bar. People who aren't musicians, but are celebrities, seem comfortable here. I don't know what our tag line should be, but it could be "This is not the Hamptons," because we don't give a rat's ass. I think it's because we see so many people. None of us are star-struck. Kathleen Turner used to hang out here and drink. We knew who she was, but you could do shots with her.

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**Peter Honerkamp:** Those first few years saw a lot of blues artists including Albert Collins, Albert King, Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, Dr. John, John Hammond, Johnny "Clyde" Copeland, Robert Jr. Lockwood, the Nighthawks, Jimmy Dawkins, John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers, Charlie Musselwhite, Mose Allison, Lonnie Mack, Lonnie Brooks, and Jimmy Rodgers.

**Nick Kraus:** The first show I saw here was John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers. I knew that he played with Clapton, and I was immediately blown away.

**Peter Honerkamp:** John Mayall first came with two smoking guitarists, Walter Trout and Coco Montoya, both of whom would have their own run with their own bands here in later years. Coco and Walter took turns playing their guitars for a gorgeous young woman who ran ice cubes up and down her legs as they played.

But it wasn't just blues—there was Leon Redbone, Country Joe McDonald, Maria Muldaur, Christine Lavin, the Paladins, Levon Helm, Billy Preston, Aztec Two-Step (still playing here almost every year), Elliott Murphy, Ronnie Gilbert, Tom Russell (I never could figure out why he never made it big), Nicolette Larson ("Lotta Love"), Texas Rocker Joe Ely, Stefan Grossman and John Renbourn, Brewer & Shipley (singing "One Toke Over the Line"), Steve Forbert (a fixture to this day), Rory Block, and Holly Near.

I remember Holly as she finished up her July 1988 show. Holly is a lesbian and the show was attended almost exclusively by women. As I exited I remember two young guys staring through the front door: "Let's go in. It's all chicks—even *you* can get laid here," one remarked to the other.

There was also a decent dose of some of the great bands of the early Sixties, albeit without some key original members, but the Drifters, the Coasters, the Shirelles, the Crickets, and Tony Williams & the Platters.

The local bands included Rumor Has It, our ultimate house band. There was Jim Turner, the Frank Brothers, Steppin' Out, Damaged Goods, the Suns of Jubal, the Lost Soul Band, the King Charles Band, Little Mike & the Tornadoes, Lucky Seven, Danny Draher and many, many more.

## **Ten: The Early Years, 1987-1992**

**Peter Honerkamp:** There are the performers and there is you, our audience, but the other essential ingredient in the Talkhouse soup is the staff.

We look on the Talkhouse as a kind of church, a sanctuary where people can go when they feel fragile and ever-so-alone, or to commiserate, or to rejoice. The continuum of the people who serve you here, for however many episodes it lasts, is part of the magic at the Talkhouse. There have been so many people who worked here over the years. We're proud that no one ever quit. People moved on with their lives after the season's end, but no one ever walked out on their fellow pirates while on a summer mission.

The early priests and priestesses included Marcie Honerkamp, who joined longtime Talkhouse fixtures Kevin Finnegan, Michael Farrell, Michael Gochenour, and Larry Wagner as the bartenders. Those four had all worked at the Talkhouse for years. The waitresses were Robyn Kuntz, Debbie Kennedy and Debbie Reutershan. Susan Bochroch followed soon after.

Phillip Vega came on board to work in the kitchen with our first chef, "Boom Boom" George Bengston, a few months after we opened in 1987 and would become a bartending fixture shortly thereafter. Paulino Collado, who is as hard a worker as anyone I've ever known, came on as the guy who cleaned up the destruction of the night before. James Pellow came on board around 1990 and has looked up to Phillip ever since. Dionne Moore was in there as well and she has looked up to James ever since. Finally, Klyph Black became the soundman, operating a six-channel board from the side of the stage.



Who were the early performers who defined the Talkhouse (and in many cases still do)?

Among the many great "regular" performers of those early years are many who are now deceased. Dave Van Ronk was one of the early visitors. Dave, with his signature "blackest voice in a white man's body," loved playing here.

**Tommy LaGrassa:** It's a cold February, circa Nineteen-Ninety-something. Dave Van Ronk had just finished playing at the Talkhouse. Middle of the week, everyone was gone, the place had cleared out.

I was hanging out, and I went over to him and told him how much I enjoyed his show. And of course, like a jerk, because I'm a Bob Dylan nut, I started to ask him about Dylan. I'm sure he's heard it a gazillion times, but he couldn't have been more gracious and patient: "You know, Bobby was a good kid." This gentle giant, kind of like Drew Holshouser.

After I figured I wouldn't bore him with Dylan, we were just chatting. A really good guy. He looked at me and said, "If you would have told me 30 years ago I would wind up in the middle of the week, in the middle of February, in some hamlet called Amagansett, playing in a saloon like this . . . I'd do it all over again." That's Dave Van Ronk in a nutshell. Dylan said he never sold out, never.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Rick Danko of the Band played here solo or in a duo straight through the Nineties. He also joined with Levon Helm and Garth Hudson as the Band, reuniting three of the five original members of that great group. (I watched Levon playing here with a local band a few years back, playing as hard and true as ever, recovering from a severe illness, and thought it was as beautiful a sight as I've ever seen.)

Rick was the most consistently affable performer imaginable. He always had time to talk to anyone who engaged him. He could listen to people ramble on about anything and never made a fan feel that whatever he was saying wasn't the most worthwhile bit of news in the world. He would get up there on stage, get the crowd singing "Take a load off Fanny" and just smile. One signature night when the power went, Rick played on acoustically by candlelight, as Glenn Tilbrook and Martin Sexton would years later. Rick died in 1999.

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Toy Caldwell, whose picture still adorns the wall behind the main bar, was as good a friend of the bar as anyone from 1988 until his death in February of 1993 at the age of 45. Toy had been a guitarist with the Marshall Tucker Band before taking a three-year break and then hitting the road with his own band.

Before we built the addition, you got upstairs by walking down the driveway and climbing stairs on the side of the building. The first time Toy Caldwell walked upstairs I came out of the office to pay him—I always pay the bands as soon as they get here so money never hangs over anything. Toy pushed me down on the couch and said, "Pay me later, let's drink some whiskey." He was a big, burly, affable, unaffected guy who played forever. Toy and his band were special friends of the place.

**Ron Rafferty:** Toy Caldwell was the same as Commander Cody—took a fuckin' shot of Jack Daniel's and off he went. He was a great show.

**Drew Holshouser:** The first time I ever came here was right before the club opened in Miami. I had come to pick up some gear in New York City, and they said, “You have to go to the end of the island, you have to go to the original club.” That was the first time I saw the room. That was when I saw Toy Caldwell.

Toy Caldwell is probably the most iconic performer to the club. There was a special thing with him and this place. I saw him that night, and it was unbelievable. He said, “I love the Talkhouse—I feel like I’m back in my dad’s house, playing in the basement when I was 12 years old. There’s no place like this.”

Up on the wall there’s Toy Caldwell and Roy Buchanan, and a few other people that played here, special performers that have passed away.

**Peter Honerkamp:** We charged \$15 to see him. One night, a guy sat down next to me at the bar and complained about the \$15 cover. I did not let on that I worked here. After a few minutes the guy turned to me again and said, “Hell, it’s worth \$15, that guy sounds just like Toy Caldwell.” He went on about how much of a fan he was until I let him know it *was* Toy Caldwell.

People always ask what my favorite nights were, but most of them just blur together. But in my pantheon was my birthday, either 1990 or 1991, when I got to sing “Can’t You See” with Toy onstage.

**Phil Vega:** When he did “Can’t You See,” every time he did that Peter would get up on stage with him and sing. He would always invite one of us up there to play or sing. I always get up there and play the washboard.

**Drew Holshouser:** I can't even tell you how many artists I've done sound for here who have said, "There is no other place like this," like Jorma Kaukonen. Or artists who have come here and said, "We've been waiting to play here forever."

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**Jorma Kaukonen:** It was lovable lunacy from the beginning. The first time I was there, they had an outdoor staircase to the room upstairs. They didn't have that staircase they have now. You got into the place through a door in the back of the stage.

Aside from the gigs always being fun, there's always some absurd lunacy. The first time I played there some sort of a brawl broke out at the door and Peter got punched in the jaw.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Jorma Kaukonen's first performance was also the occasion of my being hit for the first—and not last—time. It was March of 1989 and he was playing solo acoustic. It was one of my first encounters with what has to be the most frustrating part of hosting acoustic shows: telling customers to please stop talking. I'm still regularly astounded by how oblivious people can be to their own behavior. It amazes me how two people can stand at the bar and babble on in a loud conversation surrounded by people who are obviously there to see the performer. Anyway, on this night I got one particularly loud buffoon out who had crudely propositioned a woman. Michael Cain had recently come on as our new doorman.

**Michael Cain:** When we'd have certain acts, it was "Shhhh." It was Jorma Kaukonen in February or March of '89. Peter was all, "Shhhh." There was one guy there, a Montauk guy, he was drinking and he didn't want that "Shhhh" stuff. And when he'd get loaded, somebody

“Shhhh-ing” you, he’s like, “Hey, fuck you.” So Peter came up, I took his drink and said, “You’re out of here.” And it was fine. I had him out of there, that was it.

What did Peter do? Peter went out the side door, got in his face: “*Listen, when I tell you to be quiet...*”

**Peter Honerkamp:** Michael followed me and the bozo outside. He refused to leave. I told him we would have to call the police. "Don't mean dick to me, I've been arrested twenty times."

I turned to Michael and said, "We got a winner here."

**Michael Cain:** ...and the guy just nailed him. Freakin' *nailed* him!

**Peter Honerkamp:** By the time I turned back the fist was in my face—I just got my chin up or I might've had a broken jaw.

**Michael Cain:** Now I had to go fuck with this guy. So I started after him, and he picked up a trashcan and threw it at me. I knocked it away, he went down the ally. I found a three-or four-foot two-by-four, and thought, “I’m gonna smack this bastard.”

He jumped over the fences and ended up at McKendry’s, so I came back around and went toward the alley. He hadn’t gone into McKendry’s, but he was coming around up through the alley there—it’s now just a little walkway, but it was an alley. He saw me and said, “Hey, you big faggot! What are you doing, you faggot?” He started giving me this whole “fag” line, and I was like, what the fuck is going on? He said, “You faggot motherfucker, your ass is mine! Your ass is mine!” But he ran away from me.

I had a long black coat and slid this two-by-four out and said, “No, motherfucker, *your* ass is *mine*.” Well, he took off running into McKendry’s and locked himself in the bathroom. I didn’t want to go into McKendry’s and start shit. I saw Peter, he’d called the cops, he was going to press charges.

**Peter Honerkamp:** I had the pleasure of making a citizen's arrest in McKendry's when we tracked him down later.

**Michael Cain:** The cops came, we went into McKendry’s, and there he was sitting at the bar. Of course, I walked up, he was going, “Hey, motherfucker!”

These two cops came in, and I said, “There’s the asshole right there.” They came in and cuffed him and stuffed him.

**Jorma Kaukonen:** It’s not like that kind of stuff happens all the time, it’s just funny things where people behave in tolerable-yet-inappropriate ways.

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**Ron Rafferty:** I never used to work Sunday nights, because I had to work on Monday morning as a landscaper. Peter said, “I’ve got no one to work tonight, Ron. *Please* do it. I won’t even put you on the door. All you’ve got to do is sell the band’s shirts and hats.” Great. At the very end of the bar when you walk in, back in the day—they were kind of in the middle of remodeling and it wasn’t a bar yet, but you were behind the bar. I was in this little cubbyhole selling hats and shirts for Hot Tuna.

Holy Christ. It was an anniversary of his sobriety or something, so he decided to play for about 18 fucking hours. Sunday night at four in the morning, I was looking at his manager going, “You better pull the fucking plug, man. Enough is enough.” It was an *early* show, he got on stage at like, 7:15. It was Sunday, and I was bombed from softball still—we used to get wrecked playing softball.

It was fun, but it just lasted too long. By 12:15, I was like, “*Five hours* this son of a bitch has been on.” Three-and-a-half more hours he went on, and the people were still yelling for more. I was totally burnt. I couldn’t pack up those stupid hats fast enough. And I didn’t even get a Hot Tuna shirt out of it!

**Steve Day:** Keith Hernandez is notoriously anti-public eye. He came in here and then mentioned us on a Mets game! He was here for Jorma Kaukonen’s show. The Mets were on a road trip out west, Milwaukee, and he couldn’t be here, but his girlfriend came in. During the broadcast, he was like, “Well, Jorma is on stage right about now.”

Ron Darling and Gary Carter were like, “*Jorma?*”

“Jorma Kaukonen. Hot Tuna. He’s playing at the Stephen Talkhouse right now, and my girlfriend is there.”

**Jorma Kaukonen:** Paul Simon came to see us, once. It might have been Michael Folzarano and myself—I don’t think it was a Hot Tuna gig, though I could be wrong. It led to Paul hiring me and Michael to be part of the development aspect of that *Capeman* project that he did.

Talk about notable people that show up at a gig, it doesn't get too much more notable than Paul Simon.

**Ken Rafferty:** We saw Hot Tuna there, with Paul Simon. Ronnie and I were working for Paul at the time, at his house. He would always talk to us while we were working around his property. We said, "Hot Tuna is at the Talkhouse tonight, we're going."

"Oh, really? I haven't seen them in years," he said. "I'm going to come down too—see if you can get me a seat at your table." Of course!

We called Peter and told him Paul Simon was coming down and was going to sit with us to see Hot Tuna. Now Peter had to move everything around, and we got the best table—which sometimes isn't the best table, right up front. The tables then, he used to have right on the end of the stage, and he'd put us right in the middle. The problem with that is, a lot of the performers spit when they sing. If you're sitting back, you don't see it; when you're sitting up there, right in the spotlight, you see it.

Quite a few guys in Hot Tuna saw Paul, and they acknowledged each other. Then during intermission, Paul went in the back to see somebody and left his hat on the seat. This girl at the next table saw the hat, and she reached over and grabbed it. I said, "Put the hat back."

She said, "What's it your business?"

I said, "Put the hat back, you're going to get your ass thrown right out of here. Put the hat back," and she really didn't want to. I really got mad: "What the fuck don't you understand? That's not yours, that's his, leave it there. He's coming back, and that's his hat." She reluctantly put it back on the chair.



**Ron Rafferty:** Working for Paul Simon was fun, and it eventually tied into some things at the Talkhouse. I was there one night when Warren Jeffries did a benefit for a local guy, and Paul stopped in and played a couple songs.

Right after the show, Paul saw me and gave me a big hug, “Oh my God, how are you?” I hadn’t seen him in a while. Paul left, and a guy tapped me on the shoulder.

“Who are you?”

“What do you mean? My name’s Ron.”

He said, “You must be somebody important, the way he hugged you.”

“Well, I used to mow his lawn.”

**Larry Wagner:** Debbie Kennedy dropped a tray of drinks on Paul Simon. Someone had bumped into her. Peter was right there and said, “Welcome to the Talkhouse.”

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**Peter Honerkamp:** In 1989 we added a steady dose of zydeco with Buckwheat Zydeco, Queen Ida & Her Bon Temps Zydeco Band, Wayne Toups & ZydeCajun, and C.J. Chenier and the Red Hot Louisiana Band, as well as a band out of New York City called Loup Garou that would be a fixture at the Talkhouse for the next decade.

**Stanley Dural a k a Buckwheat Zydeco:** Every performance here, things is always happy, people are always having a good time. When it’s all over with, everybody is happy and

satisfied, and vice versa to myself. That's a good feeling, and that's why I keep on coming back. Stephen Talkhouse, that's home, man. It's what I dig.

**Peter Honerkamp:** But more than any other genre, blues defined the early years of the Talkhouse: Saffire -- The Uppity Blues Women, Koko Taylor ("We're gonna pitch a wang dang doodle all night long"), Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown (who died after seeing Katrina devastate New Orleans), Joe Louis Walker and the Boss Talkers, and Anson Funderburgh and the Rockets. Elvin Bishop was a fixture in the early years and his blues band typified the best in Talkhouse music.

Random oddities: The night Janis Ian's band showed up for soundcheck *sans* Janis. She missed her flight—and the gig, the only time I can remember someone not showing—though she made it up two weeks later and signed her press photo "With Apologies."

The Laura Nyro Door: In the olden days the Talkhouse stage was where the dance floor in front of the current stage is. It was a small wooden stage about six feet in depth. There was a driveway where the current stage and bathrooms are. The artist used to come down a stairway onto the driveway and enter the club through the front door.

Well, when I went to book Laura I was told she had to have direct access to the stage. She would not walk through the audience to get to the stage. I think it was David Bromberg who told me she showed up at a gig he was co-billing with her and, when was told there was no direct access to the stage, had to be carried through the crowd in a refrigerator box by four guys. I decided Phil might drop her so we created a doorway so they could enter from the driveway.

John Andrade, a regular at the time, persuaded me to unearth Tiny Tim, whose wedding to Miss Vicky on *The Tonight Show* was the most watched nuptial at the time. Tiny was every bit as quirky as his TV persona. Who you saw was who he was. He arrived in his red and white striped jacket, voluminous locks, bright wide eyes, and said, "What a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Peter."

He was, sadly, a bit disheveled and after his brief show, which included George M. Cohan tunes and "Tiptoe Through The Tulips," sat upstairs counting his pay. A car arrived. The current "Miss Vicky" strode in and took all his money except for train fare back to the city. When she drove off he looked at me sadly, then smiled. He was as childlike an adult as I've ever known, exclusive of some of the people who work here.

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John Lee Hooker played, I think, in the fall of 1988. Most of the major national acts until then cost \$15 to \$20, but to get this blues icon it was \$3,500, hence a \$35 ticket. It was the highest price we had had to date. It was also a fall show, so the New York City crowd would not be there. But it was the iconic John Lee Hooker and it was too heady an opportunity to pass up.

A few years later his minimum would skyrocket to \$20,000 and above, but there are these windows where we can get someone great during the gaps in their career. And their agents know if they put them here they are in good hands. There will actually be the right equipment, the right number of loaders, and exactly the hospitality they asked for in the dressing room. And they

were always paid before they went on. It went, and has gone, a long way toward why we are what we are. They get treated like the staff and the customers: in on the game of A Good Time.

**Jim Lawler:** In the beginning, it started with the blues and folk artists. Most of the blues artists were really happy to play here because they got paid right away. Some blues artists told stories where they had to go to the owner's *house* to try to collect from them. Peter was out in front as far as that goes.

**Peter Honerkamp:** John Lee Hooker signed his picture "To Petr" (probably because he was illiterate) back in the days when no one photographed shows and we relied on press photos for the walls. It's been stolen since then.

In those pre-Internet days, people had to call in to buy tickets. We had an answering machine, and the bartenders took orders as well. Our new employee, the indomitable Phil Vega, had recently come on board.

I came in one morning and heard him on the machine telling a woman who wanted to buy eight tickets that the show was sold out. He had confused Hooker's show with one by John Hammond. I then explained in great detail how to take orders so this screw-up would not be replicated.

Later that day, I called Phil at the bar with a disguised French accent, introducing myself as Pierre Minot and demanding a free table for the upcoming John Hammond show. Phil politely informed me that none were available. I insisted on getting the best table, pointing out to Phillip that he obviously had no idea how important I was. He was firm, informing me the Talkhouse treated everyone the same and there were no tables.

*"Listen, you stupid spic,"* I cut in.

*"Fuck you, Frenchie,"* he replied, and hung up.

A few hours later, I came in, ordered a drink, and put my head in my hands. When Phil asked what was wrong, I told him I was broke and couldn't pay the mortgage. The only chance I had was if this French banker named Pierre bailed me out.

I told Phil if he called and asked for anything just to say yes. I then asked Phil if he had had any such call. He told me there had been no calls.

*"Fuck you, Frenchie,"* I replied.

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**Dee Moore:** Dave Mason, almost the house band there for a while.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Dave Mason started gigging here in those early years and remains one of the mainstays to this day (2010 was the first year we couldn't secure a date). He started out playing solo, then played with Jim Krueger (until he died in 1993), who penned the classic "We Just Disagree" that Dave made famous in the late Seventies. He also played with Jim Capaldi, the drummer from Traffic, on a few occasions and now performs with the Dave Mason Band. It remains one of the best shows I've ever seen, independent of the fact that I love the music.

Taj Mahal was back, sometimes solo, sometimes with his rocking band the Coppertones and fishing off Montauk with John Andrade, one time barely making the show because the fog rolled in.

Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister of Pakistan, stopped in to see Taj play when she was in exile after her first stint as the leader. She ordered skim milk. By the time I returned from Brent's she was fast asleep during the show.

She returned from exile in October 2007 and was assassinated by Islamic terrorists two months later.

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There was music out here before the Talkhouse. A guy named Preston Powell brought it to a place called Bay Street in Sag Harbor. Many of the acts that would become Talkhouse fixtures—Tito Puente, Buster Poindexter, and Toots & the Maytals, to name a few—headlined there. But when Talkhouse started doing live bands, lots of other places did too, like the Beach Plum, Burke's Roadhouse, Catalina Café, Newtown Cafe, J.W. Ryerson's, and Mimosa Beach Café. Oceans (later Pacific East) in Amagansett and Hanson House in Southampton came on the scene around 1989.

**Dee Moore:** Poindexter and his lounge lizard act. The whole room, as expected, ordering martinis. His degree of decadence resonated well with the Talkhouse crowd. Good parties.

**Peter Honerkamp:** *The East Hampton Star* called it "a veritable invasion of bands." But it was the Talkhouse that consistently brought in national acts, and ones that played a wide spectrum of music. *The Star* would note, "In keeping with an already established trend, Stephen Talkhouse claims the biggest names in this week's musical lineup."

The key to putting on so many shows was in varying the genre. You could walk in and see Richie Havens, then Buddy Guy, and the next night a lesbian crowd cheering on Holly Near.

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## Eleven

**The East Hampton Star:** *The Stephen Talkhouse is packing a wallop this week. James Cotton, the "hoochie coochie" bluester most recently here for a Parrish Art Museum concert, will brandish his blues and blues band at the Talkhouse next Thursday. . . . Jesse Colin Young will be there the night before, with Eliza Gilkyson his opening act. . . . The Saffire Uppity Blues Women give an encore concert at the Talkhouse on Friday, Oct. 27, at 9 p.m. Rumor Has It will provide the sounds for an Oct. 28 Halloween party. The King Charles Band will exhale some jazz-horn refrains starting at 10 p.m. tomorrow. And Papa John Creach -- the jazz-blues-country-rock-and-roll man with the amplified violin, of Jefferson Airplane, Jefferson Starship, and Hot Tuna fame -- will do his stuff, with his band, beginning at 9 p.m. on Saturday.*

**Peter Honerkamp:** Nineteen Eighty-nine, our second full season, brought the New Riders of the Purple Sage, Doc Watson, Delbert McClinton ("in his silk suit, turned the room into a lounge, he did," says Dee Moore), Stanley Jordan (playing two guitars at the same time),

NRBQ, Taj Mahal & the Coppertones, Tiny Tim, Janis Ian, bluesman Kenny Neal, Joe Ely, Karla Bonoff, Robert Gordon, Eddie "the Chief" Clearwater in his trademark headdress, Kinky Friedman, Wayne Toups & ZydeCajun, James Cotton, Commander Cody & the Lost Planet Airmen, Toy Caldwell, and Maria Muldaur.

When Maria's band couldn't make it, she called up Dr. John, who I picked up at the Amagansett train station in time for the show. Paul Simon came in to see John Renbourn and Stefan Grossman, the first of a number of shows he saw in the early days.

**Phil Vega:** For NRBQ they had to take all the tables and chairs out, and all the tables were reserved! So everybody had to stand in between the stage and the bar. They had this grand piano that almost didn't fit.

**Tommy LaGrassa:** I just thought Peter was the greatest guy right from the beginning, because the first "national" name Jeannie and I came to see—it was a weekday night—was Jerry Jeff Walker, "Mr. Bojangles." We were on line, probably down to what is now Indian Wells Tavern—it was a big, long line. It wasn't the first show, but it was the first show I was paying to get in and see.

From previous encounters here and there, Peter recognized Jeannie and me on the line, welcomed us, and said, "Follow me." We came in the back parking lot, through the back door. He got us in, got us comfortable, possibly bought us a drink if he wasn't too crazily busy. But he made that that gesture, and the first thing he said to me as we walked into the kitchen was, "Tommy, I don't know you that well, but I can tell you are one of the good guys." That started our friendship, and we couldn't get off to a better start. And that's Peter.



**Phil Vega:** Joe Ely, incredible guitar player. The first time I ever heard him, he played with Jimmie Dale Gilmore, and this cat called Dave Mason.

**Marcia Ball:** Usually we come in, play our gig, and go on to the next one. But one time, I finished my gig there—it was the night of the big concert out in Montauk, the Montauk Light fundraiser—and Joe Ely was there. He had been playing at the event. He said, “Do you want to go to a party at Billy Joel’s house?” I said, “Yeah!” That was my brush with greatness. That was the year before a big hurricane hit that end of Long Island. That house was badly damaged.

**Mick Hargreaves:** Stephen Talkhouse is the only place this could happen: I went to see Joe Ely perform with his band, and after the show, I had a beer at the bar with him. I mentioned that I had seen the Clash in New York City during their *Sandinista!* period, when they did a chaotic two weeks straight of shows at the Bond International Casino in Times Square. Joe had sat in with the Clash at a good number of those performances. I mentioned to him that I had been worried for my safety at the show I attended. That's how crazy it all was. He said, "I believe it. I was backstage and I was worried for *my* safety!"

**Peter Honerkamp:** Lucinda Williams first played then—for only \$20—to a half-filled room.

**Paul Cleary:** My first girlfriend, who I met at the Talkhouse the first week I was here—Veronica, she was lovely—introduced me to Lucinda Williams’s music. I went, “Yeah, I like that, a bit quirky.”

The next thing, she was playing here. Wow! I invited Veronica. Even after we had split up, I invited her out, and Lucinda played a number of times there. I got to meet her. Wherever she plays, I still try and at least get one or two shows a year in with her.

**Peter Honerkamp:** David Bromberg played forever and warned the audience to keep attending shows because there just were no clubs like the Talkhouse left anymore. I heard of one called Sweetwater in Mill Valley, but that club finally did close. There are other small clubs, but none as small as us offering up these acts. To a one, performers tell us we're the smallest room they play.

**David Bromberg:** The first time I played there, it was about half the size it is now. There was no stage, it hadn't been expanded. It was right in the front.

I was scared. It looked like I was going to be playing in a noisy bar and nobody was going to listen, and I hadn't done that in quite some time. But it wasn't like that. It was full, and the audience was wonderful.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Bay Street featured the Wailers, Yellowman, Otis Day & the Knights of *Animal House* fame, and Robyn Hitchcock—all of whom would later play here. Gene Casey and the Lone Sharks first graced the stage and Loup Garou, along with Rumor Has It, Steppin' Out and Lucky Seven, were late-night fixtures.

We did our first benefit for the Retreat, a local organization that aids victims of domestic violence. It was just getting started back then and we gave proceeds from a Taj Mahal show to them. Billy Joel and Christie Brinkley stopped in. She urged Billy to join Taj on stage (he opened for Taj once in his early days). Billy was reluctant to upstage him but Taj invited him up and they played together, the first of many spontaneous performances by major artists.

The summer of 1990 brought Dave Mason. *The East Hampton Star* praised his show and added, "Smaller than most local pubs, it has consistently provided top-name acts to a region ready for quality entertainment. Booking a performer of this caliber represents nothing less than a coup."

The Mamas and the Papas came, featuring only John Phillips as an original member. His daughter Mackenzie played, as did Spanky McFarlane (famous for "Sunday Will Never be The Same") and Scott McKenzie ("If You're Going to San Francisco [Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair]"). Mitch Ryder & the Detroit Wheels sang "Devil With a Blue Dress On."

Leon Russell came to town. He had a giant bus and needed one night of housing on Memorial Day weekend. I put him up in my friend Carol Wesnofske's house, which I rented for one night. When he saw the size of the venue Leon remarked to one of his loaders, "The guy that booked us must be a drug dealer."

In those early days lots of the local bands crashed on my living room floor, and performers like Taj and Loudon Wainwright stayed at my house. One local band, thinking a small tree on the counter was pot, sliced it up and smoked it. I didn't book them again.

Laura Nyro, Kingfish, the Holmes Brothers, Shawn Phillips, Richie Havens, Robben Ford, Kenny Rankin, Lucinda Williams, NRBQ, C.J. Chenier & the Red Hot Louisiana Band, Tinsley Ellis, the Nighthawks, Little Charlie & the Nightcats, Dan Hicks, John Hammond, Karla Bonoff. The Frank Brothers and Terry Winchell joined the growing list of local talent playing the joint.

**Jim Lawler:** We started playing here too, rotating with Klyph. It was wailing along. We started to really attract people, from Foreigner to Paul Simon to everybody in between, as well as all the old folk and blues people—Buddy Guy, everybody.

### **Twelve: Hot Blooded (1990)**

**Ron Rafferty:** Some of the great shows were the ones that were never even scheduled, where someone would just show up. Like when Mick Jones showed up with Foreigner's new singer, Johnny Edwards.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Foreigner guitarist Mick Jones popped in and often played. He had put Foreigner, minus lead singer Lou Gramm, back together.

Sean Rafferty had a band called the Flood. While they were playing one night Mick joined them on stage along with the band's new lead singer.

**Christopher Walsh:** Sean and I had met a couple summers before, and with two friends in Montauk we formed a band and were playing in bars a bit before we could legally drink.

It was early June in 1990. I was 23 and playing at the Talkhouse for the first time. It was during the second set that I noticed an older guy at a table to my right. The room was dark but I could make out a man with longish hair, a blue blazer and jeans. He was slouched low in his chair, but I thought he was smiling and nodding his head now and then.

Foreigner. Huge band in the late Seventies and, especially, the Eighties. Mick was their guitarist, and their producer too. He *was* Foreigner—that was my impression, anyway. He had recently produced Billy Joel's *Storm Front* album, too. That record was huge, and especially on the East End: Billy lived in East Hampton at the time, I think, and the song "The Downeaster 'Alexa'" was about the tribulations of local baymen. A couple years after *Storm Front* came out Billy got arrested with some commercial fishermen in a protest against a prohibition on the catching of striped bass.

Mick was at a table with a younger guy with a very long ponytail. Two glasses stood on the table before them. When we were back onstage for the last set, I asked Mick and his companion—Johnny Edwards was his name, and he was Foreigner's new singer—if they wanted to sit in, and they both stood. Mick took my Telecaster, turned my amp way up, and started playing "Double Vision." Mick was a damned good guitar player.

Though nobody knew the song too well, Sean, Doug and Chris kept up. Mick had my guitar and Johnny was singing, so I just kind of danced and sang some backups.

**Peter Honerkamp:** The replacement singer, Johnny Edwards, had an amazing voice and they played the Talkhouse one summer night. The place was packed. I remember a couple standing outside and saying "Boy, those guys sound just like Foreigner."

**Christopher Walsh:** That show was incredible. Before their set, I saw Johnny Edwards across the packed room and called to him. We talked for a minute and he said how much fun he'd had the night they'd sat in with us.

But to see such a huge rock 'n' roll band in that little space, the room so crowded you couldn't move, all of us elbow to elbow, sweaty and drinking on a hot summer night, the band banging out one FM radio anthem after another. . . . It was pretty sensational.

**Larry Wagner:** Foreigner was here all summer doing an album, and every night, Mick Jones would come up and say, "Man, I love being a rock 'n' roll star: Free booze, women . . . and the album goes right to the government."

**Phil Vega:** We did a "Seventies" night here. We built go-go cages and had two girls in the go-go cages. They were in their white boots. While Mick Jones was playing guitar, they were dancing. Kathleen Turner was here with her husband, Jay Weiss, and his band the Blue Suits.

Every time Mick Jones was here, Kathleen would show up, the Blue Suits would show up, and they would jam. Even if somebody that we had booked was already playing, they would come in and say, "Hey guys, can we play?" Everybody was very happy to say, "Yes, come on up, here's my guitar, you can use my drums." It was a great experience.

**Peter "Bosco" Michne:** Mick Jones sat in with us one time. That was cool. I was playing with the King Charles Band—we used to play out in Montauk a lot, and here a bunch, too. I think he sat in with that band. We did some blues, R&B. He was real friendly.

**Jim Lawler:** I played here with Mick Jones from Foreigner. We did "Come Together" in front of Yoko Ono. He brought Yoko and Sean Lennon. Pepto, from Rumor Has It, was playing

drums, and this stage wasn't here. I opened the back door and said, "Let me play." So I got up and played "Come Together" in front of Yoko. That was a good experience.

### **Thirteen: Into the Music**

**Peter Honerkamp:** Labor Day Sunday in 1990, Van Morrison showed up after playing Jones Beach.

**Phil Vega:** They made it here just in time. We had this other band, Steppin' Out. They were already playing, and Peter said, "I'm going to pay you guys, but I've got somebody else coming in to play." It was Van Morrison, Billy Joel, and Simon Kirke.

**Ron Rafferty:** I heard that Ron Delsener dragged Van Morrison there once, and Van Morrison was *pissed*. He was pissed drunk, and he was pissed off, like, "What the fuck are you doing to me?"

**Peter Honerkamp:** He was ornery, but he finally got on stage with Georgie Fame and Billy Joel for one song.

**Larry Wagner:** Billy Joel wanted to rent this place out the last night, and Peter said no, he couldn't do that. But they all came, and he was so drunk, Christie Brinkley had to go up and grab his ass and bring him down.

**Peter Honerkamp:** It was also the year that Elwood & Etties, Michael Gochenour's smoked ribs place, opened in the back. They were the best ribs on Long Island before Michael took his business to Delray Beach, where his restaurant helped transform the city.

## Fourteen: All Sorts of Extremes

**Peter Honerkamp:** Eric Burdon and Brian Auger of the Trinity played with the Animals on Memorial Day, Dave Meros on bass. Eric would become a fixture over the next decade and give us some of the best shows we've had.

**Suzanne Vega:** The first time I came here was 1990. I visited Amagansett for the first time over Christmas with a boyfriend. I honestly thought Stephen Talkhouse was, like, the corner bar. I had no idea it was a venue and that all these people had played here. Then I came in and was like, "Wow, look at all the people who have played here."

Then, I think for New Year's Eve that year, I saw Eric Burdon. It was the early Nineties. I thought, "I really want to play here." That one really blazed in my consciousness.

**Joann Pauley:** I really liked Eric Burdon and the Animals. That was really cool. After the set, he would come to the bar and drink, or dance around the whole area. I really enjoyed his shows a lot.

**Steve Day:** Eric Burdon told Peter that he would give us a break, he could take stuff off the fee, knowing that if he charged the same as at the theaters in New York, L.A., London, we couldn't afford it. He said he did that because he loved this place so much because it reminded him of the places that he played when he was coming up, and they don't exist anymore. It reminds them of when they were starting out.



**Sean Rafferty:** I've seen Eric Burdon there four or five times, I can't recall. The first was when I lived in Colorado. I had come back East for a week and my folks had tickets to see the show. I went, not expecting much, but was really surprised at how powerful his show was.

He had these two cats on guitar, Dean Restum and Larry Wilkins, who were just amazing. They would stand in front of each other and duel, eventually playing the neck of the other guy's guitar. Mind-boggling.

Seeing Aynsley Dunbar on drums was like a private lesson. I would walk around to the soundboard and get a great view of his footwork. The guy is a monster, total control of his instrument.

**Paul Cleary:** We were in the back bar. I was with a friend of mine. I was working seven nights that week, and this lovely young girl came to the door on a Wednesday night or something. She brought a drink out to me. I was like, "Oh. Hello!" So I got her number and invited her to come out for the weekend. She came out on a Sunday. Eric Burdon was playing.

We—two couples—had all gone to the beach and to Cyril's and we were half lit. We got back to the bar. Eric Burdon was playing, and Peter was in the bar. He went behind Andrea and lifted her shirt up and exposed her tits. Peter was like, "Everyone that takes their clothes off drinks for free!" Clothes went *everywhere*, they were flying all over the place. This young girl, who I had just met, was like, "What the fuck is going on in this place? This is *nuts*." I think she might have got topless, but I don't remember. I think there were a few pictures taken as well, which is a little scary. That was a funny night.

**Andrea McCafferty:** Eric Burdon was performing onstage, and all of us were in the back bar. He ended up coming to the back bar and pulling his pants down after he performed. There were about 40 people that got naked. It was a full bar of naked people.

**George Bakke:** Eric Burdon—he was drunk one time. Not that he was drunk *one* time, but he was *really* drunk. Got up on the stage and was having trouble coordinating himself. So he pushed the chair to the side and started singing standing up. I thought it was going to be a lousy show because he looked like he was under the weather. I have seen him maybe 10 times there, and he put on his best show *ever* like that.

**Sean Rafferty:** I would go upstairs after the show and talk to the group, mostly to Eric. We would sit on the couch and talk about Jimi Hendrix. Eric was very close with Jimi and it was great to talk to someone who actually knew the man, played music with him and was his friend. I mean, *Jimi Hendrix*, for Chrissake—how many people can you say that about?

**George Bakke:** The old performers, especially like Eric Burdon and Dave Mason, they go back and touch me in a time, it brings back where I was at a certain date and time, and was a certain *person*. That's what music is all about, and nowhere does it better than the Talkhouse. It's like having the band in the living room, with your friends. I got to know quite a few of the regulars there.

**Dee Moore:** Eric and his Animals. Took the Talkhouse to all sorts of extremes.

## **Fifteen (1991)**

**Peter Honerkamp:** We started having more international acts including Kanda Bongo Man from Zaire and Les Tetes Brules from Cameroon, a bunch of guys wearing day-glo paint and backpacks (to symbolize a peasant carrying all his belongings on his back) who played a kind of African punk music as they kicked soccer balls around the stage.

In January I came into the bar on the Sunday night before Martin Luther King's birthday. The Giants had just beaten the 49ers and I went up to the artist performing that night who had never met me, Luther "Guitar Jr." Johnson. I was so happy I kissed him. The Giants won. He just nodded and said, "I'm from Chicago."

In August, Hurricane Bob wrecked the East End and put a big hurting on the rest of the season. That Monday morning, power was out on the East End. Tracey Nelson, who ironically fronted Mother Earth, arrived to play. She walked in and said, "Well I guess we're cancelled." But Tim Myers hooked up two generators and ours were the only lights on as her show went on. She fittingly opened with "Stormy Monday."

## **Sixteen: Hot Tamale Baby**

**Ken Rafferty:** There's a female pianist, I think she's from Texas. She gets booked everywhere, and the clubs normally get packed when she appears. She had this running thing every year to play the Talkhouse. She's a great pianist and singer.

**Marcia Ball:** We had heard about it: It was tiny, and even smaller when we first started playing there. But everybody in the world played there, and you never knew who was going to show up to see the band. All of that was true, but we also heard that it was a fun place to play.

**Ken Rafferty:** She was set to play this night and a snowstorm came in. I closed the video store, walked across the street. There were maybe 10 people in the place, besides staff. They said to her, "Don't go on, wait another half-hour." She was sitting with everybody talking at the table. Peter said, "Whatever you want to do is fine."

After another half-hour went by, she said, "I don't think anybody's going to come out in this, so I'm just going to play for you guys." And she did the whole show for, like, 10 people. It was great. She didn't do her repertoire that she would have normally done.

**Marcia Ball:** We've met quite a few people out there who have become friends. The same people come every time we play there—it's just that place.

Some years ago, Jerry Wexler came regularly to see our gigs there. One night, he brought Peter Boyle. That was fun. For somebody who doesn't live in the neighborhood, I'm a regular.

### **Fifteen: Good Friends Around (1991-92)**

**Peter Honerkamp:** Richard Thompson, who played in Fairport Convention before embarking on his own, came to town. His shows were mesmerizing. *Rolling Stone* listed him No. 19 on its Best 100 Guitar Players of all time.

Buddy Guy, of whom Eric Clapton once opined "by far, and without a doubt, the best guitar player alive," was another early performer.

Kim Wilson & the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Wayne Toups, Aztec Two-Step, Canned Heat, David Bromberg, Terrance Simien, Roger McGuinn, Jonathan Edwards, the Dirty Dozen

Brass Band, Taj Mahal, John Hammond, the Rebirth Brass Band, Zachary Richard, Phoebe Legere and the Lingerie Killers, Chubby Carrier & the Bayou Swamp Band, the Spin Doctors, Larry Carlton, Loudon Wainwright III. As *The East Hampton Star* noted, "Stephen Talkhouse is steaming along, hardly stopping for a breath."

Local bands included Klyph Black and the Zen Tricksters, Border Patrol, Moving Target, and Anne Morgan.

Albert King came to the Talkhouse on a Monday night in August. I desperately wanted to be there as Albert had a reputation for being ornery but I was sick and could not. It turned out he was as pleasant as could be. Albert was notoriously hard on soundmen and Klyph Black was not looking forward to dealing with him. Luckily for Klyph, Albert's grandkids showed up and the big man turned as soft as could be when he saw them.

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**Peter Honerkamp:** In 1991, most of the acts were in the \$20-\$25 range. Our reputation continued to grow and more and more acts wanted to play the room. We strived to give the artist what he or she wanted.

Our sound system was limited in the early days, but we always had the right number of loaders, the right equipment needed, the right hospitality, and we paid up front. Most importantly we had, and continue to have, great sound engineers. Klyph Black, Drew Holshouser, and now Mike Mazzaraco and Kevin Santacroce work extremely hard to make the artist comfortable.

Their accommodating personalities immediately set a visiting artist at ease. Countless musicians have told me when they look at their tour and see they are playing here they know they can relax about that show.

In addition, we increasingly found people were willing to pay a high price for acts they wanted to see in an intimate setting close to home. The Talkhouse prices weren't that bad if you didn't have to drive to New York, pay for gas and a hotel in order to see an act. You also got to see it in a tiny space and in many instances people knew others in the audience.

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**Peter Honerkamp:** We continued doing benefits, hosting the Haitian Band Boukman Eksperyans, an 11-piece group. Proceeds went to help Haitian refugees.

Jimmy Buffett made his first of many appearances when he joined the all-female band Evangeline. He sang along on their songs and played “Margaritaville.”

**Ron Rafferty:** There were a couple of nights when Jimmy Buffett would show up. He knows how to get the crowd going. Whoever was playing, he got up and said, “Y’all know ‘Margaritaville,’ right?” And bang, there it was. That song will get a crowd going.

**G.E. Smith:** I’m pretty sure Jimmy Buffett sat in with us a time or two.

**Dee Moore:** Tuesday nights off-season hosted by **G. E. Smith** turned the Talkhouse into a living room. Cozy, top musicianship, and good friends around. All good.

Women cried in the front seats as Kris Kristofferson took top layers off onstage. . . .

**Peter Honerkamp:** The Highwaymen played at the ranch, in Montauk, with Paul Simon. The Highwaymen consisted of Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson. They played on a Monday in August.

With Colin Powell in the audience, Kristofferson sang “Slouching Towards the Millennium” solo as the other group members looked on. The song was critical of our invasion of Iraq in the aftermath of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Waylon Jennings and Johnny Cash countered with patriotic songs and Waylon blasted Kris after the show.

Kristofferson was slated to play the Talkhouse on Tuesday, but the confrontation had unnerved him somewhat. As he took the stage that night, Paul Simon joined him. It was an incredible night as Paul sang "Homeward Bound."

### **Sixteen: Miami (1992-95)**

**Peter Honerkamp:** We briefly opened a bar in New York. One of my partners at the time had a friend, and we opened a very small bar—maybe 50 people could get in—on Washington Street in the Village, right near Automatic Slim’s, where Philip Seymour Hoffman spent one of his last nights. I used to go into Automatic Slim’s and a bar across the street called Tortilla Flats.

It wasn’t a music bar. We had NRBQ there once, just because it was a modeling studio. We did that upstairs.

A couple of months after we got it open, my friend and *his* friend had a falling out. So I left, because for me to be in the middle of that. . . . And when I left, the other investors, who included a lot of small people, all left.

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We came up with the idea to start a bar in Florida. The debate was Key West—we would have been much better off, though a couple people wouldn't have been born, a couple people wouldn't have been married, and a couple people wouldn't have been divorced had that decision been made—or South Beach. Not a smart decision, but it was felt that South Beach was the up-and-coming place, we could do well, we could bring music down there. We went sometime around the spring of '92.

We had a lot of partners who wanted to work there. They needed jobs, and the cachet that the Talkhouse had already achieved in Amagansett led them to want to have a job and be a part of it.

**Wolf Reiter:** Peter called and asked if I wanted to go down there. I was free and said sure. I worked there from the beginning. I helped to set it up.

It was a big building. There was a big walk-in refrigerator with glass doors, so we decided to put the bar around it. Oh, it was fun.

I met Drew when he was the soundman there. He had to climb up this ladder, which he had to push up, and was stuck up there in the sound room right above the bar, facing the band.



**Drew Holshouser:** I grew up in Miami. My brother was a chef. He decided to open a barbecue restaurant in Clemson, South Carolina. We found a building, it had a big restaurant downstairs and a huge room upstairs. We decided, “What the hell, let’s put a rock ‘n’ roll club upstairs.”

He didn’t know anything about doing sound, so he called me—I was living in California: “Hey bro-ski, do you want to come here and run the club?” I didn’t know anything about that at the time either, but we had a friend, a local guy in town, who had a big D.J. company. He had a live-sound console and speakers and shit. We bought some stuff, we put this in, and we became the local rock bar in Clemson.

Finally, I went to the Recording Institute in Chillicothe, Ohio, and moved to Cincinnati. A friend of mine said, “I know some people in Miami that are opening a club, if you want to try out.” So I came down and talked to the managing partners—not Peter—and they said, “Well, it sounds really good, you just need to talk to our guy in Amagansett, Klyph Black.”

Klyph and I talked on the phone for, like, three hours. We just shot the shit, and we got along perfectly. I hung up, and he called them and said, “That’s the guy, hire that guy.” They asked me if I wanted to do it. I said I wanted \$25 an hour to install the PA and everything, and I wanted the job when it was done. That was how I got the job.

**Peter Honerkamp:** We opened the bar in August '92. In Amagansett, I watched Paul McCartney play with G.E. Smith and then was upstairs looking at this big red thing moving toward Miami on the television.

**Wolf Reiter:** Hurricane Andrew came late in August. We'd found out it was coming. I had a rental car and said, "I better take this back to the airport. I don't want to be responsible for it." I took it to the airport and had to get a bus back. The hurricane was so close—I'd put it off until the last minute. It was weird. Everything was boarded up. Coming back from the airport to South Beach, I didn't see anyone on the streets. It was like a ghost town.

After I got back to the Talkhouse at South Beach, a few of us went to Coconut Grove, to the house of this guy that was opening a *big* restaurant in Miami. He had put so much money into it. He lost everything.

We were really smart, hip, sophisticated guys, right? We went to his house in Coconut Grove to get away from the storm. It was *closer* to the storm. We brought five pounds of ground beef, three cases of beer, and a carton of cigarettes. That's it. No flashlights, no radio, nothing that you would use in an emergency. That's how we thought back then.

It was a ranch house on, like, a third-of-an-acre lot. We were hovered around a chimney because we'd heard that's the strongest part of a house.

I've never heard anything so loud. You don't want to stick your head out in that, you would never dare. It was so loud and thick and crashing and screeching. But at some point, I fell asleep.

We woke up in the morning. . . . When we got out, there were palm trees down everywhere. There were cars on top of boats, boats on top of cars, houses on top of palm trees. It was amazing. But nobody was hurt, and the house was not that badly damaged.

**Drew Holshouser:** Overnight, half of Miami was homeless—250,000 people. It pretty much split the county in half. The government said, “There’s a curfew south of the street. Miami Beach is cut off, no one can go there because we don’t need people coming home late at night, loaded, trying to get back to wherever.” Whatever their reason was, the city and county fathers decreed that Miami Beach was off-limits. If you didn’t work there or live there, you couldn’t get across the causeway. That was on for three months, and when it came back, everyone was so caught up in rebuilding and finding a place to live, just devastated, that it never really came back. But it was a very interesting time, and Miami Beach is a very interesting spot.

**Peter Honerkamp:** It hit, and it stopped us cold. It took a while for Miami to recover. There was damage to the club, though far more damage south of Miami, in Homestead and places like that.

Be that as it may, we opened, we became this hotspot, but we were in South Beach, which is an incredibly retarded stretch of real estate. Pretentious and, I don’t mean this in a pejorative way, but it was models, gays, and Latinos—people who were not going to come to our club.

**Jim Lawler:** There was a crack house next door, there was a gay club that was . . . it was whips and chains, it was very physical. It produced a lot of seedy characters. So I made friends with detectives and DEA agents, anybody in law enforcement. Down there, it’s a different game.

People are playing with guns, it's serious. I would always let the law enforcement guys in, so if it started, they would end it, quick.

**Larry Wagner:** When we had a place in Miami, musicians came out of the woodwork, because now they had a place to play.

**Jim Lawler:** I did a year down there—I played and worked there. It was an incredible room, 30-foot ceilings. You could get three or four hundred people in there, and you could see from anywhere. We could have done TV there. We played as Mamalee Rose and Friends on and off over the years. I did the door, took care of the bands, did promo up and down the beach.

I wound up going to people like Joe Galdo, who is Gloria Estefan's programmer, but he ran Chris Blackwell's studio—he had a studio on 17th St. It was a studio/hotel with a Jamaican restaurant. He was very generous and would send people over. We did great acts down there, tremendous acts.

**Phil Vega:** One year Michelle Shocked, another one that I love very dearly, came in with her husband. I was doing the door at the time, and her husband was hanging out by the door. There was a little space before you'd walk into the club where you could just hang out and look and snap a shot, just to check out the place. We used to let people do that.

A bunch of Asians came into the place, and they were snapping pictures. Out of nowhere, Suzanne's husband freaked out, grabbed a camera, broke the camera. People called the cops on him. We ended up paying for the camera and everything else, and it was, "You cannot be in front, you cannot even be in the place." I had to tell Suzanne that her husband had to be thrown out or sent upstairs to the office space.

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**Peter Honerkamp:** We developed this great bar in terms of our staff going down there in the summer, creating that ambiance, the same feel of the Talkhouse. But we had a club that could easily fit in three times as many people as the Talkhouse, so it didn't have a local-bar feel. We had to get more people in. We weren't going to do this disco, crazy scene and pay promoters, but to have a local band of that size wasn't practicable.

In the first year, I thought we might turn it around. But the long and short of it is, we didn't: we got killed on a daily basis.

Local bars didn't last down there—when we got in there, we were on a t-shirt that had probably 23 bars on it. When we left two-and-a-half years later, there was only one bar still in business, so it wasn't just us. That place has the loyalty of Benedict Arnold: No one sticks with a place, they go to the next trendy place because it's all about where they're supposed to be. It's still that way.

**Charles Baty:** We played Peter's place in Miami a few times. That was fun, but it wasn't the same thing. It was a larger club and didn't seem like it had the community support that Talkhouse did. The Talkhouse is one of the few places where people would put traffic cones out to save a parking spot for the band. The martini after the gig, the little room upstairs, always a refrigerator stocked full of everything. They took care of you at the Talkhouse.

**Peter Honerkamp:** At that time, the circuit of how these acts traveled ended in Atlanta (I don't know how much has changed but probably not that much). So to send someone to Miami

was like sending them to Mars. We were naïve in thinking that the acts that we wanted to get in there would go to South Beach. It wasn't going to happen. Now, that same trajectory might be Tampa and Jacksonville, but that's still 800 miles. It was an ill-conceived business decision.

But we brought music to South Beach that no one could believe, and it hasn't happened since. Hot Tuna, Buster Poindexter, Warren Zevon, Toy Caldwell—we're a legacy there to this day among the people who remember us. A newspaper down there—I think it was called *New Times*—said “Indian Givers: We Weren't Good Enough to Keep Them.” There was a whole article on all the great moments we brought to that community. And we did. But we were taking it back, because we couldn't make it survive.

**Max Honerkamp:** I was down in Miami too, as a little kid. I just remember running around with my sister there. It was a lot bigger than this place. It definitely had a lot more potential, but I think it was just under-appreciated when it was there.

I kind of wish it was still around—judging from what my dad and other people said, I just think we went at the wrong time. If we had gone now it might have worked, because Miami has been really hot for the past 10, 15 years, as we were leaving.

**George Meredith:** I was a small investor in the Miami club. It's sad that it didn't happen. The timing was just wrong. Two or three years later, they sold that property to Armani and it became the most popular store in that section of Miami. But when we went there, everything else was a mess—there was nothing but empty buildings.

**Drew Holshouser:** I was the first guy hired in Miami, and the token Southerner. When it closed in '95, it was May, first part of June. Everybody just loaded everything in the back of a Ryder truck, and we all came up to Amagansett. I would come here for the summer for the first

couple years, like May through September. Then it just gradually grew out until finally there were enough shows for me to move up here year-round, probably in 2000.

**Wolf Reiter:** I left right after the hurricane because there was some damage. But it was open a couple years after that. In the meantime, I got a job in the city and was going out with my current wife. We decided to get married.

### **Nineteen: Just Seventeen**

**Peter Honerkamp:** As Hurricane Andrew bore down on our Miami club, Paul McCartney and his wife Linda came to see G.E. Smith & the High Plains Drifters perform.

**Phil Vega:** Oh, that's a good one! It started out with G.E. Smith. G.E. was playing here with Paul, the bass player that played with Buster Poindexter, and a couple of Buster's friends.

**Larry Wagner:** A year or so before, I was in here during the day and he walked in, and was talking to Peter. Peter had sent all the people in this area letters. Billy Joel wanted to meet this guy who wrote such a wonderful letter. That's how Billy Joel was introduced to Peter.

Peter asked him, "Anytime you want to come down here and play for the local people, this is a great venue. . . ."

**Phil Vega:** I was doing sound—the soundboard was a small 6-channel board, and there was only two speakers in the whole place. There was no big speakers like there is now or anything, just two speakers up on the stage, facing the crowd.

**G.E. Smith:** I was there with either my band or a band with some friends called the High Plains Drifters. It was a Drifters gig, I'm pretty sure.

**Phil Vega:** Right after that show, I started collecting all the wires, collecting the mics, putting everything away, and Paul McCartney walked in with about 30 people. He came from the Amagansett Historical Association right up the street—they had just had a party. I think they were trying to make some money to revamp the place.

**G.E. Smith:** I knew Paul from around here, knowing other people that knew him around Amagansett, a little bit. He came up in the dressing room when we were on a break, said, "Hey, you think I could sit in and do a couple songs?"

I said, "I don't know, I'll have to ask my band . . . I think we can probably fit you in!"

**Phil Vega:** He came down, and he knew G.E. Smith was playing. Everybody walked in, he went up to G.E. and said, "Can I sing a couple of songs?" And G.E. said, "Don't ask me, ask Paul to ask Phil."

Paul—who I knew from seeing him with Buster Poindexter—came up to me and was like, "Paul McCartney wants to do a couple of songs!"

Paul McCartney came up to me and was like, "I just want to sing two songs, all we need is two mics."

I said, "Don't worry about it, give me two minutes!" I did it in two seconds.

**G.E. Smith:** We did kind of rockabilly stuff, the earliest type of Beatles stuff, like "Blue Suede Shoes." That might have even been the old, smaller Talkhouse. In fact, I'm sure it was.



**Phil Vega:** He was not on the stage, he was on the floor, because the stage was so packed with all the equipment they had.

He did “Blue Suede Shoes” and . . . I can’t remember the second song. But it was a great show. It was a nice, hot day, and the people that left from the G.E. Smith show were hanging from the windows looking in, because it got so packed with his people and everybody else that was here for the show. People that left came running back in when they saw that he was singing. They jumped up there, they opened up the windows, they were trying to climb in. It was pretty crazy, but it was a lot of fun.

**G.E. Smith:** It's that kind of place. Always fun whether doing a set or listening to someone else. The Talkhouse is one of the great joints.

**Ron Rafferty:** I’ve been there a few times when Paul McCartney played. He played once when G.E. Smith was there, but there was another night I thought he played. . . .

**Donovan Frankenreiter (2013):** Paul McCartney was just here, right? With Jimmy Buffett? What are they doing tonight? Come on, Paul!

## **Twenty**

**Peter Honerkamp:** There were three relative unknowns who, when I first heard them perform, stopped me in my tracks. Nancy Atlas, Nil Lara, and a woman by the name of Joan Osborne, who played the Talkhouse in the spring of 1993.

**Dee Moore:** Thursday night was band night. Anybody who wanted to could give it a go. A famous Thursday night would be Joan Osborne. The place reached new heights that evening.

**Phil Vega:** When I first met Joan Osborne here, I fell in love. She's maybe two years younger than me. "You've got two hours before your show, let's go down to the beach, jump in the water!" This was at night.

We went down to the beach, I was the first one, I jumped in, they jumped in. We had a great time. We came back, and the show was a little delayed because everybody was upstairs taking showers, because they had sand all over them. That was a great show.

**Nancy Atlas:** I figured if I was truly going to be a singer/songwriter that I should probably start checking out who my competition was. What makes this story relevant is that it happened on *the very night* that I had decided I was going to give it a shot and be a professional musician. I was officially leaving behind a potential advertising career and time running restaurants. I was going for the brass ring. So on that very day I got dressed up and headed down to the Talkhouse.

Eddy McKnight was the door guy that night. He had one eye on me and the other cocked down on some crack in the outside planks leading up to the door. His blank, jagged stare could scare the shit out of you on any given occasion. He had the perfect look for a doorman 'cause you just don't want to mess with him.

I asked him who was playing and he replied, "Some chick named Joan Osborne. It's \$5. She's really good and has great tits."

I smirked a flat-chested smile and thought, “Yeah, whatever. I'm on this. Let's see what she's got.”

I handed over my fiver, went inside to a packed bar, and got my ass blown away. By the third song I was uncontrollably crying, and not because I felt particularly touched. I felt completely and utterly fucked. I was in disbelief. *This* was my competition? If this girl hadn't made it, how the hell was I ever going to even have a chance at this? I was Smokin' Joe Frazier, cold on the floor. Ali laughing on the mic with her gi-normous, swinging jugs.

**Peter Honerkamp:** It was a tough night because a couple of drunks from a bachelor party endeavored to force their way into the club after they were initially refused entry. I wound up with the bachelor's hands around my throat at the front door, four of his pals pushing him from behind while four of my friends stood behind. When I called back to the bar to call the cops the group—all cops—turned and ran.

**Dee Moore:** Another was Felicia and the Hotheads. Three-piece behind her, woman breaks into song and had us for lunch! On the floor crying, “I'd rather go blind then see you walk away,” lap dancing unsuspecting front-seat guys while screaming, “You can have my husband but don't you touch my man.” Great inspiring energy in that room every so often.

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**Peter Honerkamp:** We had our first ever Sixties costume party in August in memory of Toy Caldwell, who died that year. Toy was a big man with a big heart.

## **Nineteen: Random Early 1990s Stories**

**Peter Honerkamp:** J.J. Cale played. He was noted for songs that Eric Clapton covered, like "Cocaine" and "After Midnight." As always, I paid before the show. He nodded and said, "Thanks for the work."

**Paul Cleary:** I came from Ireland in '93. My brothers had been out here before me, and a guy they came to visit had come here and stayed. He lived in Springs.

He was home in Ireland. I was playing rugby over there and was kind of at a dead end, work-wise. I met him in a bar and said, "I need to get away from here for a while." I decided to come out for a holiday, came here, and kind of went, "Whoa!" I didn't realize where I was going.

It was the fifth of July, so of course the place was buzzing. We went to a barbecue down at Fresh Pond, and then went to the Talkhouse. Michelle Shocked had just played. She opened the door and literally bumped into me coming out the door. I went, "Fuckin' hell, that's Michelle Shocked! All right. Where am I here?"

Michael Cain was at this party, so he ushered us in. I went, "I like this place!" I had just been going there as a customer, obviously, but I really just came here and stayed, I never really left.

**Peter Honerkamp:** The Blind Boys of Alabama—talented gospel singers—came to town. After they performed my friend, the talented artist John Alexander, asked me if I would bring them to sing for his guests at a dinner party at his house.

Since John lived around the corner from the club, I decided to walk them over. I led the five of them, each with a hand holding the shoulder of the one in front of him, to John's house, where they sang for Barbra Streisand, Paul Simon, Lorne Michaels, Chevy Chase and others.

As we walked back, I happened to look back and saw the fifth blind boy looking up at the moon. When we got back to the club I asked him why he was looking up. "I replaced the fifth blind guy, who died. I needed the gig and they gave it to me, but I got to pretend I'm blind. Don't tell anybody."

## **Twenty-two: A Misfit Crowd**

**Andrea McCafferty:** I was 19 when I started working here. I remember telling people my age that I worked here, and everyone was like, "You work at the Talkhouse?" It was kind of stigmatized, it wasn't cool at the time. It was, "That's a rough place, the weird, artsy-fartsy crowd hangs out there." It was an older crowd, too.

We're older now, but it's *such* a younger crowd than it was. It was a lot different. You had the funky, crazy artist people in the early years. There was more of a misfit crowd. When it first started, it was a music club and it was real rock 'n' roll. It was new.

We were serving food when it was jam-packed. You know how it is now; we were waitressing in those crowds. The kitchen was insane: he'd be popping out lobsters and conch fritters, all the tables outside would be full, and we'd be trying to get forks and knives and there wouldn't be any because the kitchen was so disorganized.

We had paper plates, so I remember many times walking through the crowd and being like, "Oh god, oh god, please don't fall, please don't fall." The plates would cave in, because

they'd have so much water and butter from the lobster on them. You'd be like "Watch your back!" trying to get through the crowds. Everything was an obstacle. You'd be like, "I've got to get dessert. I've got to get through the crowd, I've got to get to the freezer and scoop gelato. . . ."

The thing that was cool about that time, too, was that we waited on the bands. The band would sit down before they would perform. We got to know them. Sometimes we'd do shots with them.

## **Twenty: Welcome to the Breakfast Show**

**Peter Honerkamp:** WNEW FM broadcast live from the Talkhouse. It was at 7 a.m. and billed as *Breakfast at the Talkhouse*. Needless to say, that was the only time we had breakfast at the bar.

Toy Caldwell had played the night before and most of us just stayed there all night. Mick Jones was there, as were Billy Joel and Christie Brinkley (a picture of them from that morning hung by the front door, until it was stolen). There was this big-busted radio rep shouting orders, demanding every person in the audience be seated before the live broadcast began.

**Phil Vega:** That night we had to throw everybody out at four o'clock. We threw everybody out, and they just got on line. They stayed for the two hours, and then it became three hours, because we had to hook up the new phone lines outside, new generators into the building because the building couldn't hold the power.

It was great: the Blue Suits, Kathleen Turner was up on stage with them. Where the stage is now used to be a driveway. She parked her car there. I remember being upstairs after going,

like, 12 hours straight, from bartending to closing everything out, taking all the tables and chairs out, making sure all the windows were covered so the lighting would work right.

I was upstairs listening to it on the radio, and Christie Brinkley walked upstairs. I was just in my boxers, no shirt on, and was lying on the couch. She came walking in and said, “Oh, excuse me! Where is the dressing room?”

“I don’t know, excuse *me*. This is my house also, just walk on in the dressing room. Let me go change.”

So I changed, and I heard screaming and yelling from the office: “Oh! How you doing?” It was Kathleen Turner. I heard, “Oh! I saw this guy, he’s lying on the couch in his underwear!” Right away, Kathleen said, “That must be Phil. He’s a really nice guy.” And then, “Where’s my bottle of tequila?” I had the bottle of tequila there. There was a bottle of Remy there for Billy. Boom boom boom, whatever you need, just ask me, I’ll take care of it. I did a couple of shots.

I used to have this big-ass cat, he looked like a raccoon. Kathleen Turner said, “Let me go get my stuff,” and ran downstairs. The cat was inside her Mercedes, in the back seat. She opened the door, the cat came jumping out, and she freaked out. She was like, “What the hell was that, a raccoon in my car?”

“Oh, that’s Rocky. Rocky Raccoon.”

**Klyph Black:** I had been here for 24 hours when Billy Joel played live on WNEW. I had set up the band the night before, did everything, closed down the bar, cleared the stage, set up the stage again for the 6 a.m. thing. I was sitting on the cigarette machine, looked out the window, and there was Peter Boyle. He was pretty tall, I saw his head. I said, “Hey, Peter.” It was five-thirty in the morning. He said, “What’s going on here?” I said, “It’s the WNEW breakfast hour,” or whatever it was. “Do you want to come in and watch?” He said, “Yeah.”

He came in through the side door, and the two of us sat on the cigarette machine and watched the whole thing go down. It was great. Peter was a cool guy.

**Peter Honerkamp:** About 15 minutes before airtime, Kevin Finnegan plugged in two coffee makers on the patio bar and blew out all the lights in the club. Tim Myers and I raced downstairs and plugged in replacement main breakers with a minute to go while everyone waited in the darkness and the big-busted radio rep demanded to know what was going on.

I went outside, opened a beer and took a leak by the dumpster. Another radio rep ran up, thinking I was a derelict trying to break into the club. We're definitely not a morning place.

### **Twenty-four: One Time One Night**

**Klyph Black:** I remember when Los Lobos played here, when it was the small place, before the “big” stage. I talked to the sound guy. He said, “What do you got?”

“Twelve-channel board, two monitor mixes.”

“How many wedges?”

“Four.”

“All right. *How* big is the place?”

“It’s small.”

“Oh, we’ve played small places.”

“No, it’s *small*.”



The road manager came in, I was sitting at the bar. He walked in through the door, from the driveway. I said, “Hey, how you doing?”

“All right. Where’s the stage?”

“You’re standing on it.”

He said, “This is never going to work,” and got all stressed out.

The band walked in, they stepped on the stage, looked around, and said, “This is great! It’s like playing in your living room.”

I said, “That’s exactly what it is. This will be great.” They set up, they played, and they rocked it.

## **Twenty-five: 1994**

**Peter Honerkamp:** In April, the town approved our expansion so we could construct new bathrooms and build a large stage. In the old Talkhouse, the bathrooms were behind the right side of the main bar. The old stage was about six feet deep and we added additions on the side for the larger bands, or they just played on the floor. There was a driveway to the east side of the club with a stairway to the second floor. When construction was completed, we had a 20-foot-long by 14-foot-deep stage. The larger stage made it possible to book acts that never would have fit in the old Talkhouse.

Jimmy Buffett played again. No other celebrity musician has done more for the Talkhouse than Jimmy, who plays here almost annually for charity or fun. He has also played two concerts for the Wounded Warrior Project.

(In 2005, I booked a concert at the Martha Clara Vineyard in Riverhead with Joan Osborne, the Funk Brothers and Ann Wilson. The proceeds were to go to the Wounded Warrior Project. The local radio station WEHM, the vineyard and I were set to lose over \$30,000 of our own money and raise zilch for the charity when Jimmy agreed to headline. Needless to say, he saved my butt and put us in the black. Jimmy also hosts the soldiers at the Key West Margaritaville each year and takes them fishing.)

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*The East Hampton Star* opined, "I thought it couldn't be done but, yes, the Stephen Talkhouse in Amagansett has finally surpassed itself," in writing of the performance by Little Feat.

Nil Lara & Beluga Blue came up from Miami to wow the crowd. By then Nil had become a Miami phenomenon.

Jeff Buckley, then unknown, played to a virtually empty room while we cheered for the Knicks on a dead weeknight in early June. He put up with us gracefully, then helped Andrea McCafferty clear the tables.

**Andrea McCafferty:** I loved Jeff Buckley in college. He was my hero. I was totally in love with him, like, “He is so hot.”

We were really busy. I was 19 or 20 and bussing tables, and we had to get our own drinks half the time, because the bartenders were so fucked up. So I was running around, I’m a nervous wreck, and all of a sudden Jeff Buckley starts bussing tables with me. I was like, “Oh, thank you so much.” He said, “Hey, I used to bus, it sucks, and I’m going to help you.” And he bussed all the tables with me.

**Peter Honerkamp:** He would hit it big, and then tragically drown in Wolf River Harbor in Memphis.



Marty Balin, Jack Casady and Paul Kantner, three original members of Jefferson Airplane, played as Jefferson Starship. A fourth original member, Jorma Kaukonen, was slated to play with Jack Casady as Acoustic Hot Tuna the following night. Jorma was outside that night, but declined to play.

John McEnroe came to the Hamptons with his band, McEnroe versus Borg or the Interplanetary Breaks Band.

Peter Wolf & the Incomparable House Band played over Labor Day weekend. Mick Jagger and *Rolling Stone* publisher Jann Wenner attended that wild show.

**Ron Rafferty:** One night, Mick Jagger showed up to see Peter Wolf play. That was a big to-do. I wasn't supposed to be working. Mick walked through like with blinders: no one mattered. He had a bodyguard that was as wide as this table.

**George Meredith:** We were sitting right on the stage, essentially. I love Peter Wolf. Peter Wolf is the kind of maybe-Mick Jagger that he wanted to be. He was great. He started singing and I was just *with* him. He was dressed in this tight, black outfit, everything.

I kept looking over at Beth, and she wasn't even watching the show. Finally, I said, "Are you . . . and she gestured. . . ."

**Beth Meredith:** I was sitting right next to Mick Jagger.

**George Meredith:** I said, "Okay, I understand." Those things happen there.

## **Twenty-six: Hillbilly Jazz**

**Klyph Black:** I backed up Vassar Clements, which was one of the highlights for me.

Peter called me up and said, "We've got to put a band together for Vassar Clements. Do you want to do it?" I said, "Yeah, I'll do that." I knew him from *Old and in the Way*, from his bluegrass stuff. I had just gotten in to the Zen Tricksters, and I called Jeff Mattson and Rob Barraco and said, "Want to back up Vassar Clements?" They were like, "Yeah!" Those guys are in Dark Star Orchestra now.

(The Zen Tricksters played here a bunch of times. Actually, the first time they played was without me. I wasn't in the band yet, but I'd played here with Donna Jean Godchaux from the Grateful Dead.)

I called Vassar and got his wife, Millie. I told her what we were doing, that we were going to back him up at the Talkhouse. She said, "Okay, I need an address and I'll send you a tape. Learn the songs." I had to get two tapes, because I was in Michigan at the time and the other guys were in New York.

I got the two tapes and we all sat down and woodshedded the songs. We got together, learned the songs, made sure all the arrangements were good, had a girl singer come in and sing some parts that needed to be there. Then we waited.

The day of the show, Vassar was supposed to be there at two o'clock in the afternoon. He showed up at seven o'clock, an hour before the show. No rehearsal. He was like, "I don't know what happened, but here I am. Did you get the tape?"

I said, "Yeah, I got the tape."

"Did you learn the songs?"

"Yeah, we're all good, man, ready to go."

He said, "What was on the tape?"

I said, "The first song was 'Pan American Dream.'"

He said, “What tape did she send you? What’s the next song?” It was “Gone Gone Gone.” He said, “I haven’t played these songs in 15 years. What was that song, ‘Gone Gone Gone’? I can’t sing that song, I don’t remember it.”

I said, “I like the song, Vassar, I learned it, I know it.” He said, “All right, you sing that one.” Then he said, “What else is on it?”

“‘Boogie in the Barnyard,’ ‘Kinfolk in Carolina,’ ‘Windjammer’ . . . .”

He said, “You know ‘Windjammer?’”

“Yeah, we got it.”

He said, “All right, we’ll get up there and see what happens.” We started the show, and after the first tune, “Lonesome Fiddle Blues,” Vassar told the audience, “This band here I really appreciate. This is the first time I met them, tonight. Thanks for being here to save me!”

We had done our homework and really learned the stuff. He loved us, and that started a good 10-year relationship of playing with him when he came to the East Coast. We would back him up, and we did a bunch of shows until, unfortunately, he passed away. When we played here with him . . . that was magic. It was great.

### **Twenty-seven: Alabama Gravy Slammer (1995)**

**Peter Honerkamp:** Earlier, I mentioned how I stopped when I heard Nancy Atlas, Nil Lara, and Joan Osborne sing. But when it comes to playing, Klyph Black, Peter "Bosco" Michne (who beats out Klyph for most performances on the Talkhouse stage only because Klyph

traveled on the road for so long with the Zen Tricksters), and Andy Aledort—in my book all three can play guitar with anyone and are as talented as many of the guitar greats I've been talking about.

One night at an open jam, I saw a bunch of young kids accompanied by their moms watching Klyph and Bosco play. I told the kids they were watching two of the best guitarists I had ever seen.

I then asked Klyph if he thought he was as good as I thought he was (meaning, up there with the greats). He shrugged. I asked him if Bosco was and he nodded. When Bosco came over, I asked him the same questions. He shrugged about himself and nodded about Klyph. Modesty and talent.

I mention this now because there was another "local" group that could have, and nearly did, make the big time. They came to the Talkhouse that summer after selling out two of my friends' joint in New York City, the Mercury Lounge. They not only sold it out but the bar ran out of beer. They were, and occasionally are when they reunite, the Bogmen. Great guys, great talent, real friends. They would pack us on a regular basis over the next few years.

We did theater that year with "Lone Star," one of several off-season theatrical performances we would host. We continued to sprinkle in comedy, which rarely worked, though *Saturday Night Live's* Father Guido Sarducci went over big.

One oddball event occurred when I added Sophie B. Hawkins, of "Damn I Wish I Was Your Lover" fame, on the same night I had already booked Suzanne Vega. Double bills are a pain, but Sophie was a trio and Suzanne wasn't a big transition. The only problem was, Sophie

arrived thinking she was the opening act and had only rehearsed three songs with her trio. I explained it was either refund the money or give them 65 minutes, so they put together a few covers and had her sing her signature song twice. She took long breaks between songs, chatting with the crowd. How she managed to get away with it amazes me to this day.

John McEnroe returned, this time joined onstage by his wife, Patti Smyth.

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There are a lot of lists of the top 100 guitarists of all time, but an argument can be made for Buddy Guy, Hubert Sumlin, John Lee Hooker, Bo Diddley, Warren Haynes, Derek Trucks, Link Wray, Albert Collins, Leslie West, Dick Dale, Dickey Betts, Johnny Winter, Robert Fripp, Jorma Kaukonen, Richard Thompson, and Andy Summers, all of whom have played here. Keith Richards and Robbie Robertson have attended shows.

**Klyph Black:** Andy Summers was really cool, because we didn't know what to expect. The band was killer. Chad Wackerman was playing drums, he was awesome. The band was really something special. It was interesting, because no one knew what to expect from him. He didn't do any Police stuff; he did his own kind of progressive stuff. Very cool.

Warren Haynes was great here. I think it was the Warren Haynes Band, even before Gov't Mule. *Tales of Ordinary Madness*, I think the record was. "Fire in the Kitchen" was one of the songs on it.



Warren is the guy who started to bring back the “guitar hero.” After Eddie Van Halen, there were some guys, but few that really stuck out like Eddie, or Hendrix. But Warren is one of them. I wanted to be in Gov’t Mule, I did.

**Peter “Bosco” Michne:** Gov’t Mule played here a lot back in the day. That was loud. My son was three or four, really little, and he used to take all the pots and pans out of the cabinets and put them in front of the TV and watch the Allman Brothers video that we had, with Warren playing. So I brought him down here for a soundcheck. He knew everybody’s name in the band.

We watched the soundcheck. Then Warren was standing there. I took him over and said, “Gavin, do you know who that is?” He looked right at Warren and said, “Yeah, that’s Warren Haynes. Where is Dickey Betts?” Warren looked at me like. . . . I couldn’t believe it. He couldn’t, either.

Derek Trucks was just an unbelievable experience. One night MamaLee Rose and Friends played after the Derek Trucks Band, and Derek sat right there and watched the whole thing—I couldn’t play for shit! He was out there dancing with my wife and everything. They were really nice, too, really nice guys.

**Paul Cleary:** Dick Dale—Peter was like, “You’ve got to come and see this guy.”

“Ahh, I don’t really want to.”

“No, you’ve *got* to see this guy.”

“All right.” So on my night off I was back at the Talkhouse. But you were just so freakin’ glad you came. These guys have reputations for a reason. Or, it’s, “I’ve never heard of these people,” and you get completely blown away.

**George Bakke:** Dickey Betts's truck ran off the road and he didn't have equipment for his show. They dug out equipment from the Talkhouse, and he played acoustic. I did not think that he could pull off an acoustic show, and I'll be damned, he did. You sat there shaking your head.

**Larry Wagner:** We had a Lynyrd Skynyrd tribute band here. Artimus Pyle, the drummer, survived the plane crash. He was here playing with the tribute band. I didn't realize it until he elbowed up to the bar, and all these cute little girls were there. He told us the story about the plane crash. He really opened up, saying one moment he was there with his girlfriend and best friend, and the next thing it's crashed and he's crawling out of the plane and over the mountain. Basically, every day for the rest of his life is gravy.

He didn't get into much more than that, except now all these girls were behind the bar making Alabama Slammers. They were singing "Sweet Home Alabama." Now, whenever anybody orders an Alabama Slammer, it's an "Alabama Gravy Slammer."

**Peter Honerkamp:** Lucky Petersen came to town and, like Albert Collins and Buddy Guy before him, played guitar out on the street. In 1988, Buddy had actually hitched a ride and drove away playing his guitar. Lucky laid down in the street and played. When a cop pleaded with him to move he responded, "You can't arrest me, I'm already arrested."

## **Twenty-eight: Party On**

**Ron Rafferty:** I was very fortunate to see some of the shows I've seen there. Some, I hated. I loved their music, but. . . . I got stuck on mosh-pit duty for the Radiators and had to throw a punk out one night. The Radiators are all great dudes, but they had a following—"Fishheads,"

they called them, because they were from Louisiana—catfish heads, I guess. They used to get so radical, jumping.

One night, this kid had two beers in *each* hand and he was fuckin' dancing, and the beer was splashing out of each bottle and landing on the monitors. The singer, Dave, was looking right at me, gesturing toward the guy, and I was going, "Yeah, I know," but there were, like, 20 people between me and that guy. And I don't want to ruin the whole show.

Finally I walked up behind him, through the crowd, and said, "Dude, you can't be fuckin' dancing, you're getting beer everywhere."

"Ohh, come on, come on!"

I said, "That's the first strike. Put two of them down. I'll let you get away with one in each hand." Okay. The band is all singing, this is all going on right in front of them. So he put two beers down, I moved back, and Dave winked like "Thanks," because the shit was *everywhere*.

Two seconds later, the kid's got the other two beers up. I walked over to him, tapped him on the shoulder, and said, "That's fuckin' strike two, pal, put it down." He put the beers down and went [holds up middle finger], "Fuck you!"

"That's fuckin' strike three." I grabbed him by that little finger and yanked him. I dragged him through the crowd right to the back door and backed him up. The doors had the panic bar, and I pushed him against it. The door popped open, and he was out onto the gravel. There was nobody allowed back there in the old days, employees only. Now, it's like a lounge.

Apparently he went around to the front door and was complaining to the doorman, “Why did I get thrown out, I didn’t do nothing wrong.” They didn’t know what had happened inside.

Break time came, and I went out front and saw the guy there. I told them, “Don’t let this guy in,” and told them what happened. The doorman was like, “Get the fuck down the road, get out of here.”

I went upstairs to see the band, and Dave said, “What happened?”

“I threw the son of a bitch out.”

He said, “Man, I kind of feel bad. That guy follows us everywhere, from state to state.”

I said, “Well, the next state you see him in, tell him to fuckin’ behave! Respect the equipment a little! You’ve got great fans and they follow you everywhere, but *Jesus*.”

He said, “Yeah, he was making a mess. I’ll talk to him.” And son of a bitch, if he didn’t walk down Main Street, where the guy was still running his mouth. He went over to him right then and there: “Dude, calm down. You’re going to see us in Hartford in two nights. We know you’re there. You fucked up tonight, life goes on. Go down the street and drink.” And he did, and that was that.

Those guys were good. But you knew what bands you didn’t want to work.

## **Twenty-nine: In the Midnight Hour**

**Steve Day:** A lot of the bands that come here are stopping between Boston and New York, so they're packing up immediately and leaving. So you don't really get a chance, they don't hang out, like the stories I've heard about the earlier days. They would hang out all night.

The Commitments was one of the bands that used to hang out all night. We'd be hanging out drinking shots with them, they'd be telling us stories about their tour. Then I'd look up and the sun was coming up. "Guys, I have to go."

One time, James and I were hanging out with the Commitments, and we lived together at the time. I went home all tired, I woke up that afternoon and James's truck wasn't there. I was curious about what was going on, and Peter didn't know where James was. James had hung out with the band and gotten on the bus with them, drove to Philadelphia and went on tour for four or five shows. He was e-mailing pictures of himself standing backstage with the band. He came back, showed up and started working again.

They were a blast. Everybody that came to see them had seen the movie, and they loved the movie because they knew the songs—they're all American R&B classics. This place would be going nuts.

### **Thirty: Hallelujah**

**Peter Honerkamp:** We have a generator now, but for years we did not. Four times the power went out during a show. The first three times an acoustic act was playing: Glenn Tilbrook, Martin Sexton, and Rick Danko. Each time, the artist played their set by candlelight. It was magical each time, and the audience loved it.

**Nick Kraus:** I saw Rick Danko three or four times here, I guess. Rick had been a mess for years. He had a reputation for being very hit-or-miss, depending on where he was with his personal life and substance issues, and tremendous weight gain and loss. I guess that goes with getting on and off whatever you're doing, and that lifestyle.

The Band's song "Stage Fright" was about him, originally. All of a sudden, boom, the power went out, it was a candlelight-type setting, and to see him basically sitting on one of the monitors, I think, with an acoustic guitar—some of this stuff gets invented in your mind as time goes by—was one of those unbelievable nights where you knew you were part of something special.

**Steve Day:** Martin Sexton had played here four times a summer: Friday and Saturday of Memorial Day and then Friday and Saturday of Labor Day, so I had seen him for years. I'd seen the guy a dozen times, and he was okay, but it had gotten kind of stale.

He had always played solo acoustic, but that year he brought two guys with him, a bass player and a drummer. They did their soundcheck, and I was blown away—just by the fact that he had a band, and they sounded incredible.

**Eiji Shiga:** It blacked out into his *second* song. He couldn't play anything. We were all scrambling, all the doormen and staff came inside holding flashlights at the stage to keep him lit.

**Steve Day:** A big groan went up from the crowd, and this place was packed, sold out. Now what do we do?

**Eiji Shiga:** He played acoustic. His drummer, who was like, "What do I do now?" went outside and asked for a beer box.

**Steve Day:** We got the drummer an empty Budweiser box to use as a drum—he turned it over and started playing it. And I think Klyph Black was doing the sound and had an extra acoustic guitar, so he gave it to the bass player.

**Eiji Shiga:** The drummer played with brushes, and *killed* it. They played a whole show. This room was completely packed to the gills, people behind the bar, sitting on the bar, everyone mesmerized.

**Nick Kraus:** The drummer had just gotten into A.A. or something, and an empty case of beer was the only thing we could find that he could play—you couldn't have the regular drum kit because it would have overpowered Martin. It was an unbelievable night. I was holding a flashlight on Martin, people were sitting with candles, and you could hear a pin drop. That was an amazing night.

**Steve Day:** Now, when this room is full, the bodies soak up the sound. So he was just on the stage, 20 feet from the bar, and you could barely hear him. He's belting it out, because it's so stuffy in the room. We had taken every single candle we could find and put them on the bar and tables. The stage was still dark, so Phil and I took two flashlights. We stood behind the bar and used them as spotlights.

You could hear a pin drop in here. You would open a bottle and it would sound like a gunshot, because it was so deadly quiet, and everybody was *straining* to hear the guys on the stage, because there was no amplification. No lights, but every time you'd look up, people were grinning from ear to ear, like, "This is incredible."

And the last song that he did, "Hallelujah," he had the crowd do a kind of chorus, like "Ahhhhhh," over and over, and *he* started getting into this "*Hallelujah, praise Jesus, Hallelujah,*

*praise Buddha,*” more and more, like a tent revival. Everybody was clapping along... I’m getting goosebumps just thinking about it, and I’m not even religious!

He was singing “*Praise Allah,*” and everything, and then bang! The power came back on, and the place went nuts.

**Eiji Shiga:** The last song was about “turning the lights on,” or “let the light shine.” All of a sudden the power came on and he played his last song half-acoustic, half-electric.

**Nick Kraus:** I’m not a religious person, but *right* when he was going into that “Hallelujah” song, “Bound for Glory” or one of those spiritual songs, the power came back on, at the very end of the show.

**Eiji Shiga:** It was one of those moments where you’re like, “I’m so glad we work at a small venue like this where no one panicked, we’re just here for the music, no one’s complaining. The beer is still cold.”

**Steve Day:** The funny thing about that is, I was sitting here with Phil holding a flashlight and we had goosebumps, and Peter was losing his goddamn mind, because it was a Saturday night, Labor Day weekend, he was thinking, “I’m going to lose money, we don’t have a band.” And the last song that he did was “Praise Jesus,” and bang, the lights and power came on, and we were going to make some money.

Afterward, everybody was so jazzed about this, and nobody was leaving. Usually, after the first show the place clears out, then the late-night crowd comes in.

**Nick Kraus:** There are great moments like that. There are always a lot of great times here, but sometimes the best are when things *don’t* go according to plan, although maybe not



from a manager's standpoint! Whether it's in life or just part of the job, trying to find those moments is tough, but I think on nights like where the power goes out and you're holding a flashlight on Martin Sexton and the drummer who's in A.A. is playing a beer box for drums, then you can say, "This is what it's all about."

**Steve Day:** During the show, Martin Sexton, who doesn't drink, said, "This is ironic that he's playing a Budweiser box, because he's in A.A." Everybody laughed, he laughed about it.

After the show, the drummer and his girlfriend came over to the bar and ordered a double Jack rocks and a beer. I'm thinking, "*No fuckin' way. Am I gonna enable this guy to go off the wagon?*" I didn't say anything, but I was dying inside.

Fuck it, it's an adult, he's older than I am. I got him his drinks and *clang clang*, they go down—he was all happy with his girlfriend—and *another one, clang clang*, and I'm like, "Oh crap."

I had to go upstairs for something, and Martin was upstairs. Because I couldn't keep my big mouth shut, I was like, "Martin, that was a great show, blah blah blah," and then "You know... your drummer is downstairs... that line about the A.A., the Budweiser box, the irony... He's sitting at my bar, and I feel bad, because he's having a drink. I don't wanna drop a dime..."

He looked at me and said, "I was fuckin' *joking*." Oh man! So I went down and said, "Have another one on me."

**Nick Kraus:** I never knew that! I've been telling this story like that for 15 years! He said it really deadpan, and I thought he was dead serious. Of course, now that I think about it, why would someone even mention that?

## **Thirty-one: Tempted**

**Glenn Tilbrook:** Several fun-stuff things have happened here. One of the shows people remember is when the power went down. I think it happened twice in the same evening. Once it was off for a minute or so, and we bumbled through that and it came back. And then it went off and it was “Okay, let’s not mess about.” So we just carried on the gig in the audience. I went into the audience and walked around, everyone gathered ’round.

**Matt Dauch:** He was like, “All right!” Boom, he did his songs, he walked around and sang. That’s a pro, right there. Madison Square Garden or walking around singing songs, it doesn’t matter.

**Andrea McCafferty:** Everyone started lighting their lighters. You could hear a pin drop, and his voice just carried. It was one of those magical nights.

**Glenn Tilbrook:** It was really fun, and it was really memorable for that. If you talk about the power going down as being one of the reasons why you enjoyed the show . . . but the consequence of it was really great. It was really lovely.

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**Nick Kraus:** I worked three of the blackout shows. Glenn Tilbrook was very cool, and he always puts on a great show. I remember working the door one night, I think it was the fall and

there was a nor'easter and the power went out. I didn't stamp anybody because there wasn't a late-night band and everyone was older, no one was gonna bullshit you.

All of a sudden, he said, "Come on, everybody," and took *everybody* outside in the middle of Main Street and started playing. I completely lost control over what was going on.

Another time I was standing outside, and he invited somebody on stage who was *hammered*, and they were singing "Old McDonald" or something like that. I thought the guy was a heckler or something, so I grabbed him and muscled him out the door. Everybody was booing me, because it was the guy's birthday and Glenn Tilbrook had invited him up. Another of my shining moments of security action.

**Glenn Tilbrook:** I've spent a few nights in the car park in my RV, which I bought in 2001, at the beginning of a very magical time of touring for me. This was one of the first places, if not the first, that I took the RV. I remember making a very complicated Spanish fish stew in the car park [laughs], which worked out really well, I was very, very pleased with it. Local ingredients—it was great.

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**Steve Day:** I think it was the very first bar shift I worked. Chris Carney and I were setting up the bar while Glenn Tilbrook, with a full band, were doing their soundcheck. Chris had worked behind the bar a few times, so I was asking him, "What do we need?"

We were hauling ice and chopping limes and all that kind of stuff while they were doing their soundcheck. We got everything finished and were leaning against the bar, thinking, "I think

that's everything." There was a *big* line outside waiting for this soundcheck to finish. We were going to open the doors and everybody was going to rush in. Chris opened a couple beers and said, "Good luck tonight." I said, "Thank you." I was really nervous, because it was the first time I'd been back there.

They finished the soundcheck, and Glenn said, "What do you guys want to hear?" Chris said, "Play 'Tempted!'"

"Okay," and the full band played "Tempted," and it was just the two of us in the room. I was looking outside and there was a huge line of people, jumping up against the windows, looking in, while it was a private concert for Chris and me.

I looked at Chris, and he said, "Cheers." Like, "This is a great job, isn't it?" That's what I feel about this place: it is a *great* job.

## **Thirty-two: 1996**

**Peter Honerkamp:** The 19-piece Count Basie Orchestra performed, though how we fit them I still don't know. It was tougher than Dickey Betts's two drum kits and Bo Dollis and the Wild Magnolias, a group of Louisiana Indians in headdresses and full regalia who outnumbered the staff and audience the night they played.

Tito Puente performed for the first time and I brought Billy Hofmann up to see him so Billy could tell him stories of making love to girls in Central Park while listening to Tito's music. Billy, a now-deceased dear friend, was a great artist who drew many of the artists that

played here. His works can be seen throughout the Talkhouse, and there is a gold plaque on the bar bearing his name near where he often sketched. (Other gold plaques commemorate friends of the bar who have passed—and one for John Hynan and Joann Pauley, who are still with us).

Garth Hudson, Levon Helm and Rick Danko (three of the original five) brought the Band to the Talkhouse, commemorated by a Joe Lauro poster. Joe offered up some incredible rock 'n' roll films that year as well. The Band first played in the spring, then returned for two shows in the summer.

Loudon Wainwright III played in September to celebrate his 50th birthday. I think all three of his kids and at least three ex-wives were there.

**Beth Meredith:** His whole family was there. We see Loudon every time he is here.

**George Meredith:** I don't know if we've ever missed one of his concerts. I have black and white pictures of Rufus Wainwright at the Talkhouse. He was 19. He didn't sing in public then, he was in college.

**Beth Meredith:** He sang once with Loudon there when he was still a kid. He was about 16 years old. That was the first time I had ever seen him.

**George Meredith:** After his concert in 2013, Peter said, "That was one of the most moving things I've ever seen." He did this thing about his father as well, and it was so touching. His father was managing editor of *Life* magazine, which at the time was the biggest magazine in the world. We saw him at the Bitter End maybe 20 times, too. We've seen him, probably, 40 times, but that show, Peter said it brought tears to his eyes. It was so brilliantly put together and so touching. He's brilliant, he really is.

## Twenty-seven: Storytellers

**Peter Honerkamp:** The performance of the year was Sting doing a VH 1 *Storytellers* show. They put tracks in the bar so the cameras could run along them. We put speakers outside so people could hear it. Billy Joel came to see what was a mesmerizing show.

**Max Honerkamp:** The first concert I ever saw was Sting, when he played here. I remember that day kind of vaguely—I must have been five years old or something. That was a cool show. I remember the songs I liked a lot were “Roxanne” and “Message in a Bottle,” but I didn’t really know what was going on in music then.

**Michael Cain:** I was part of the security for *Storytellers*. It was like somebody coming and playing in your living room. It was just amazing.

**Phil Vega:** There were no tables, nothing there. They had a track that went all the way across. All the people working, changing the lighting and everything else, were behind the bar, and they were cutting the filters to the right size. They took the Stephen Talkhouse sign down and draped the whole room.

There were maybe 150 people outside. It was early in the morning. Me and Tammi were bartending outside, and I heard the song “Roxanne.” Me and Larry came running in, and we screamed, “We know this song!” like Eddie Murphy in *48 Hours*. And then you heard, “Cut! Cut! Cut!”

We used to have pictures in the corner of Sting, but little by little people started stealing them.

**Ron Rafferty:** The Sting filming, that was a biggie. Of course, Peter hired the Jack Nicholson impersonator for that. Peter and the Talkhouse crew invited *so* many people to this thing that we had to open up the back patio area for a party for people we all knew.

Peter wanted to spice *that* up a little, because he realized that all these people were not going to be able to see Sting. “I’ve got to give them some kind of entertainment, so let me do this.” Peter is a great entertainer and one of the best organizers.

**Andrea McCafferty:** It was just incredible. Peter had sent me to the train station to go get this Jack Nicholson look-alike. The train was late, and I knew I had to be into the Talkhouse by a certain time because they weren’t letting people in after that. I was furious: “If I miss Sting, I’m going to kill you,” because he’s one of my all-time favorites. It was an amazing show.

*Why was there a Jack Nicholson look-alike?*

**Andrea McCafferty:** Because Peter likes to do pranks.

### **Thirty-four: Pranks**

**Peter Honerkamp:** Playing pranks on the staff has been an ongoing feature of the Talkhouse.

**Ken Rafferty:** There was one big bartender/bodyguard/bouncer guy, Mark Bench. He married one of the waitresses and they moved to Hawaii. When I had the video store across the

street, Mark came across one day, and we were talking about music—I would play a lot of music during the day. Mark said, “I’ve got a CD by them”—whoever it was—“that you would really enjoy. It’s rare, you can’t get it anywhere. If you want, I’ll bring it over and you can record it”—I had a CD burner. I said yeah, sure. He said, “Whatever you do, don’t lose this, we can’t get another one.” I said no problem. So I burned it.

A couple days went by, and it was a Friday night, eight o’clock or so. I had planned on doing this—no one had done it before. I had an old, green World War II army jacket with some tears and paint smears and stains, an old pair of ripped-up dungarees, construction boots without laces, and an old, blond wig—I don’t know where I got it. It was all disheveled. I turned it backward, which was even worse when it hung on me. I said to Mario from the pet store next door, who wears thick glasses, “Do you have an old pair of sunglasses?” He said, “I do, they’re kind of scratched.” I didn’t tell him what I wanted them for.

I was in this outfit, and I didn’t shave for, like, three days—which was not customary then, unlike today—and took some ashes from the ashtray and made my hands and fingernails all dirty. I put the wig on, I put on a red bandanna like Willie Nelson, these sunglasses, and I was all dirty. I’d bought a cigar, cut it and burned it, so I had a little stub of a cigar. I had a shopping bag, an open loaf of bread. I looked like a real hobo.

I closed up the video store, walked across the street, nobody saw me. I saw this couple coming from Indian Wells Tavern—it wasn’t Indian Wells then. I was hunched over, walking, getting into character. I heard the woman say to her boyfriend, “Oh, *look* at this poor gentleman.” We’re passing each other in front of the Talkhouse, and she stopped and said, “Here, sir, get



yourself something.” It was a \$20 bill. I said [grumbling, raspy voice], “Oh, thank you very much.” It was Angelica Huston, but I couldn’t come out of character and say, “I don’t need this!”

In my pocket I had that CD to give back to Mark. I had taken some dollar bills, maybe ten of them, and crumpled them up terribly and put them in a little clump. That was going to be my spending money.

I walked in the back entrance, and in the back was Phillip, Kevin Finnegan—he owns a bar in Spain now—and Mark. As soon as I walked up the couple wooden steps in the back, Phillip saw me, thought I was a bum, and said, “Get out of here! Get the fuck out of here!”

I said, “But they told me in the other side that I could smoke back here!”

“Get out, get out!” I kept walking.

Phillip was behind the bar, Kevin was with him. They used to have a little kitchen right there. Mark came toward me and they surrounded me. I said, “Can’t a guy get a little drink, can you just give me a little bit of vodka?” They couldn’t see my eyes at all, they had no idea who I was.

“No, no, we can’t give you nothing.” Phillip was really mean: “No, I want you the fuck out of here.”

I looked at Kevin and said, “You look like a nice enough guy, can you help a guy out a little bit?”

He said, “Wait a minute,” and I saw him take out his wallet. When he did, I turned around to Mark, who’s about six-foot-four, and handed him the CD and said, “Thanks, buddy.” He looked at the CD and then at me and realized, this is Rafferty!

They didn't see me give him the CD. Kevin opened his wallet. He had, like, two dollars, and he handed it to me. My hands were all dirty, and he handed it to me, and then reached into his pocket to get some change, like 75 cents, and said, "I hope that helps you out."

I said, "That's all you got, you cheap fuckin' bastard?"

Kevin was going to kill me. He came lunging at me, and I yanked the wig off and said, "No, don't do it!"

Then they said, "Peter just pulled up, he's out front." I went running out front, I was peeking around the bushes looking at him. Peter is very paranoid, he gets really scared. He was saying to the doorman out front, "Who is that?" I really got him nervous. He went inside and they told him, "There's some bum hanging around here."

He said, "I know, I saw him!" I forget what I did, but I went in and got Peter good. He said, "You son of a bitch!"

I don't remember if Peter did anything right after that. But then he did: Madonna.

**Peter Honerkamp:** It all started with a Madonna look-alike I hired in the mid-Nineties. I had her dropped off in a limousine with a bodyguard.

Louie (John Landy) was outside when she pulled up. After she hugged him, he exclaimed to the doorman, "Madonna's tits touched my chest." She proceeded to ask our chef, John Ciullo, for mashed potatoes, which caused him to go to Brent's to get some. After chatting with Jeff "Pepto" Silverman, he told me that she was going to delay going on tour so she could see his garden.

**Ken Rafferty:** We were going to see a good band, and Peter said, “I’m giving you the tickets, you won’t have to pay anything.” I said, “Well Peter, there are going to be five of us.” He said, “Don’t worry about it, you’ve got a table,” just a little to the right of the stage.

We were sitting there waiting for the band to come on, everyone was having cocktails. Timmy Meyers, a partner of Peter’s, came down and said to the table, “Would you guys mind if Madonna sat at the table with you? She’s coming in, and this is the best table. It’s unexpected.”

We said, “No, we don’t care at all.” We made room, they added two more chairs, and sure enough, in came “Madonna,” sunglasses, blonde, sexy looking, a bodyguard—which was really the girl’s husband or boyfriend.

They sat down, we all said, “Hi, how ya doing?” She ordered a drink, and she knocked the drink over so it came shooting right at me. But I managed to not get wet. I was looking around to get napkins to wipe it up. As I did that, I went to the bar and said to Phillip, “I need a Talkhouse poster, do you have one?” They used to have yellow posters with Stephen Talkhouse on them. I said, “I’m going to get her autograph while she’s here.”

He was in on it too and said, “I’ll bring it to you.” I went back to the table, we cleaned it up. The plan had been that she was going to get me wet and then wipe me down.

Then she started to take a joint out of her purse, and her boyfriend/bodyguard was going to light it. I said, “You know, it’s not a good idea to do that here. You’re better off if you walk to the back, there’s a patio back there.”

She said, “Nobody would bother me”—that would be what Madonna would say, right?

She started to light it, and I said, “No, no, you have to go back there.” So they made believe they were going back there.

When she came back, I asked for an autograph. I got the poster, she signed it, “Love, Madonna,” and then kissed it with her red lipstick. I kept it in the video store for, like, five years, even though I knew it wasn’t Madonna, though at the time I didn’t.

The show went on. She went to the back patio after the show and was sitting there. A big guy, who’s a doctor in Southampton, I think, really thought it was Madonna, and so did Louie. He really thought it was Madonna, and was stumbling all over her.

**Peter Honerkamp:** The best was Louie. When the bodyguard (her real-life boyfriend) went to the bathroom, she told him she wanted a new bodyguard. "Why?" I asked. "Because he doesn't fuck me good enough." Louie stepped up and announced, "I would like to apply for that position."

I told Madonna then that Louie was really not very important. When I went outside he shoved me and shrieked, "You're fucking up the most important day of my life!"

**Ken Rafferty:** They finally told me that it wasn’t Madonna, and I was laughing. I had been played, but it was okay. This was get-even with me, and it had cost him a fortune to do this! He went for it.

I went back there and watched them falling all over her. They told them, Louie and Jeff, “It’s not Madonna, it’s a look-alike.” They didn’t believe it. When she left, they followed her out to the limousine.

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**Peter Honerkamp:** We've had other celebrity look-alikes including Joe Pesci (poor Eiji's heart was broken when he learned he was a fake). Britney Spears, who somehow fooled Nick though she was a terrible look-alike. Jack Nicholson at the 1996 Sting concert, and Paris Hilton.

**Ken Rafferty:** The same summer, after I closed the video store at about nine, I came home. I used to have longer hair, and I shaved my head, leaving just a fuzz. I saved some of the hair and had Spirit Gum, and made a skinny mustache. I had tight, rimless glasses, and I needed a suit. I knew that Ronnie had a gray suit that he didn't fit into anymore, and I certainly wouldn't fit into it, but it was perfect. I put the suit and a tie on, and looked like somebody that had just come from Europe. At the Talkhouse, you'd definitely be out of place.

It was dark, and I went to walk in the front. Phillip was there, with Steve, I think. Phillip was drunk. I walked through, and everybody I was passing was kind of, "What's this guy doing here?" I walked through the whole bar to go into the back. It was packed.

In the back, when you go through the big door, there's a post there. I went around and sat down. Kevin was the bartender. Now, Kevin and I have known each other a long time, and he didn't recognize me at all. I ordered [in pseudo European accent]: "I take a vodka on the rocks." He gave me a vodka, took the money, and thought nothing of it.

I started snapping my finger, trying to instigate some shit, and he looked at me. "Give me glass of water." He gave me some water. "This is not good water," I said, trying to get a rise out

of him. So who came in and sat down but Michael O'Rourke, an Irish guy that owns the fish market, with one of his workers, another Irish guy.

I said to them, "How are you doing?" He said, "Fine, fine." "Great night in here. Where's all the girls?"

He didn't want to be bothered talking with me, because he was talking to the Irish guy, so he said, "Back there, go back in that room, that's where all the women are."

I was getting closer and closer to him, and I said, "There's good girls in there? Because I need to fuck tonight."

He said, "Well you go back there, Mister."

I said, "What are *you* do?"

He said, "I'm just having a beer, I just got off work."

I said, "You know, sometimes I like boys too." Now, he couldn't move far enough away. I said, "Come on, you come out with me, I have a nice Mercedes, we go park on the beach."

He said, "Mister, please," in his brogue, "leave me alone. I don't want to talk to you!"

"Oh, come on, come here! You nice looking, I like you!"

Marcie came walking down, and I went over to her and whispered, "Marcie, it's me, Ken Rafferty. Don't pay any attention. I want to get Peter again." I saw Peter running around doing his flamboyant dance that he does when he gets all excited—he's too busy to talk to anybody—and said to Marcie, "Go over and tell him I walked behind you and grabbed your ass."

She said, "I can't do that!"

I said, “Don’t worry about it, just go over and do it, and point me out, I’ll be sitting here.”

I went back, I was watching, smoking this cigarette. Now, Kevin was standing there watching me, and realized it was me. He came over and said, “You’re a motherfucker.”

I said, “Shhhhh.” Now he had a smile on his face, and he was looped—he was always looped, that was how he worked.

I saw Marcie tap Peter—he was in a hurry, he had his notepad—and say something and point at me. Ten or fifteen minutes later, I saw this other Irish guy who worked there, Paul Cleary. He was really a bad-ass guy, he’d knock you out. Paul came from one side as Peter and Mark were coming from the other. I knew Paul Cleary would knock me out with one punch, so I had to play this right.

Peter came behind me and tapped me on the shoulder. I ignored him. He said, “I’d like you to leave.” I paid no attention, and took the glass of water in my hand, instead of the vodka. He tapped me again: “I’d like you to leave.”

I turned around, looked at him and said, “Go away, little man.” He got really pissed and motioned to Paul Cleary—that’s when I moved by the post.

Peter tapped me: “Come on, you’ve got to leave now.” I took the water and threw it in his face. Paul came moving in, and I went behind the post. Just as Paul is getting ready to reach around and grab me, I took my glasses off and said to Peter, in my regular voice, “Can’t a guy get a fuckin’ drink in here?”

Peter said, “You got me again!”

Now Peter said, “Let’s do something with John Ciullo,” the chef. I said no problem. Peter walked through the crowd and was talking to him. I came walking down that way, and I looked *really* weird, maybe like a Nazi assassin or something from the Cold War.

I said, “Is there good food in this kitchen?”

Playing with it now, Peter said, “I don’t know, this is the chef, you can ask him.”

I looked at him and said, “You have good food here?” John Ciullo started backing away—I was this imposing character they couldn’t deal with. I said, “*You look like somebody that owes me money.*”

“No, not me. You have me confused with somebody else.”

I said, “No, I think it’s you. Come here,” and as I said, “come here” he was backing into the kitchen, and I was going forward.

Peter said, “*Come over here and pay him that money you owe him!*”

After that, Peter did the rest. He did three or four more things. He dressed as a woman one time.

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**Peter Honerkamp:** I've come in drag on more than one occasion, even dancing with Denis Long. I've also come as a gay man (in 1997), which fooled everyone. I had my hair slicked back into a ponytail with a gray goatee. I started at Mount Fuji, the Japanese restaurant up the



street, where I threatened to turn everyone in to Immigration if they didn't give me a job washing dishes. (They were going to throw me out, until I revealed myself.)

Next stop: Ron Rafferty's wedding at the Farmhouse, where I pretended to be a waiter and served drinks to the Talkhouse staff, none of whom recognized me. Back at the Talkhouse, I bought drinks from Dennis Lawrence for Billy Hofmann and played the drums until Paul Cleary made me stop.

Then down to McKendry's, where I ordered a Bud from Ed McKnight. When he served me, I asked him to pour it in a glass “because I like head.” When I told Ed I wanted to buy drinks for all of the boys—but none of the girls—he told me to leave.

**Thomas LaGrassa:** The gay waiter was the best. I didn't recognize him—he became someone else. He came in and started flirting with macho Ed McKnight, over the top, to where Ed wanted to physically assault him. Meanwhile, he was buying drinks for Billy Hofmann, our great artist, shamelessly flirting back for the free drinks!

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**Ken Rafferty:** Eddie was working at McKendry's, which is now Indian Wells Tavern. So what did we do? They wanted me to do something in character: “Let's go get Eddie McKnight!”

At the time, it was a horseshoe bar, there was a pool table. I said, “You guys go in first and situate yourselves, because I’m going to go right here,” the farthest I could be from Eddie so he couldn’t lunge at me.

They always went in there for a drink. On a break from the Talkhouse, they’d walk down to the next bar. As I went down there, I had to pass Estia. The people would sit at the window, like at Indian Wells, and look out. I went walking by, this bum, looking at their food as they were eating. You could see how awkward they were feeling.

I walked into the bar, and there was Eddie. He looked at me, and then at them. I sat down, put my bag down, and [raspy voice], “Hi, how ya doin’?”

He said, “Okay, what will you have?”

I said, “What kind of beer do you have on tap,” like it would make any difference to this homeless bum. He told me what they had, and I said, “I’ll take a Budweiser.”

He got the Bud, put it down, and said, “Four-fifty.”

I said, “Four-fifty? I’d like to start a tab.”

He said, “We don’t do tabs.”

I said, “What are you talking about? I have tabs all across the country.”

He said, “I fuckin’ bet you do.”

I said, “Four-fifty,” and reached in and got that wad of old, fucked-up dollar bills, and started straightening them. He was looking at me like he didn’t want me there, I was looking at them through these magnifying sunglasses, putting the dollars down. I was looking at Phil and

Kevin, and Eddie couldn't see my eyes. I was watching them as I was doing this, and they were trying not to laugh 'cause Eddie was gonna blow up!

I reached in and handed him five singles, and he put the 50 cents down. I said, "You can keep that as a tip," and he said, "Oh thank you." I said something like, "You're a pretty smart-ass guy, aren't you? You can get your ass kicked easy, you know." He came and tried to grab me, and I backed up. He came running around, but he knew who I was now. "You had me going, you son of a bitch!"

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The fire department was in some celebration, and Peter came in dressed as a woman and spoke like some old, retired hooker: "I remember you Joey, that time you hit me up good in the hallway!" He played a lot of them after that.

**Thomas LaGrassa:** He came in as an ugly, ugly woman. But he also came in as a fireman in a wheelchair, disabled from the job. He had *everybody* in the place reaching for Kleenex, in a really brilliant, slow performance.

**Peter Honerkamp:** I came as a very old man, enduring four hours of makeup to age me. Don Sharkey drove me up in an Amagansett Fire Department vehicle and wheeled me inside in a wheelchair. I was made to look like I weighed 400 pounds. It was an Amagansett Fire Department benefit and Don gave me an award for serving at the department for 50 years.

**Thomas LaGrassa:** His acceptance speech for this award, slowly but surely, started getting more and more outrageous. . . .

**Peter Honerkamp:** My name was Pappy "Cap" Warner, and I proceeded to address the crowd, speaking of kissing my wife's breasts on the beach when Amagansett was a moral town instead of today, "when we send young heterosexual men into the homes of homosexual fornicators to save their artwork." The crowd looked on in horror.

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Buster Poindexter and His Banshees of Blue came to play at our club in South Beach. It was Buster's birthday and the band had me hire a stripper to bring out a cake, topless, in the middle of their set. After the show started, the stripper called to say she was making too much money at a bachelor party and would be late. I had 20 minutes to find a replacement so I called an escort agency. The hooker showed up with five minutes to spare. I took her to my office. "The good news," I explained, "is that you don't have to have sex with anyone. The bad news is you have to deliver a cake to Buster in front of 500 people in your underwear."

"I know how to fuck, not strip," she replied.

So there I was, demonstrating to a hooker how to undress. She delivered the cake in her bra and panties.

In 1996 I arrived with the Commitments, pretending to be the sister of the director of their movie, who had insisted his sibling open for them. Dressed in drag, I asked the chef to tell

me what was on the menu. We only sold chicken sandwiches and burgers. After he said as much, I ordered the duck. When George said "No duck," I knocked glasses over and screamed at him, then opened the show singing "Take A Walk on the Wild Side," substituting the names of the staff for the drag queens in the song.

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**Reg Cornelia:** I would love to tell you some really horrible stories about Peter. He's not called a drama queen for nothing. For 25 years or more, we played softball every Sunday at Maidstone Park. Peter had a penchant for dressing as a woman for quite a few years there. We worried about him. He showed up once as an Arab woman with the whole . . . it wasn't a burqa, it didn't really cover, but it was pretty close.

A "doink" is a Texas League bloop that would occasionally fall in. Peter was called the Duke of Doink—that's not a tale out of school, he brags about that!

He hired a stripper to distract everybody so that he could hit a little bloop fly and turn it into a home run. I was playing first base, and she ran down to first base completely naked. The ball came to me—it was a joke, so we let her get on base. I threw the ball back. I stood there, guarding first base. As the next pitch came in, she gently reached over and grabbed my crotch! She took me out of the game for at least . . . . That was when he actually paid so he could hit a home run.

**Thomas LaGrassa:** Needless to say, the right fielder was not really running after the ball now. Peter was rounding second, everyone was looking at the girl. Peter was rounding third, everyone was looking at the girl. Peter hit a home run.

Of course everyone heard about it. One of the wives found out, and said, “How much did Peter pay this woman?”

I said, “I think it was \$300.”

She said, “The money would have been better spent on therapy.”

**Peter Honerkamp:** Around 1999, my softball team, the Maidstoners, played Bostwick's restaurant to raise money for the Child Development Center of the Hamptons. After the game we came back to the Talkhouse for a party. Kevin Bols hired a comedian and I gave the staff the night off, saying I was letting the girls who worked at Mount Fuji work the bar.

Those three girls showed up and promptly started working in only tight t-shirts and their panties. They also flirted with all the guys. Some of the women who came were a little upset because they thought the girls were going too far. Some danced with some of the guys and one threw her legs around a guy's neck as she swung from the sprinkler pipe. People were paying more attention to these three Asian chicks than the comedian who, frustrated, asked them if they wanted the stage.

One grabbed a stool, sat with her back to the audience, slowly took off her shirt, slid her panties down to show her butt, then unclipped her bra and threw it away. It was only when she turned around that we realized it was a guy. The other two were as well, though one had breasts. Suddenly the women loved me and several guys wanted to kill me.

In the summer of 2009, the sound engineer Mike Mazzaraco decided to unnerve me by running into my office naked and doing jumping jacks. This was before my morning coffee and it did unnerve me. As revenge, I had a fake rider submitted for an opening act for Dave Wakeling & the English Beat. The transvestite performer Vavoom was to open, as she/he was the offspring of the president of the William Morris Agency. Of course, it was simply a female impersonator I had hired.

She arrived. I had Dave Wakeling complain about Vavoom opening to make the gag more plausible. All of the equipment on her rider was impossible to rent on short notice, so first she complained to Mike and Kevin Santacroce, the other engineer, about that. Then, every time she started gurgling into the microphone (yes, gurgling) I had someone walk across the stage or into the bar. By now she was shouting at Mike and Kevin—or weeping.

They posted people at both entrances to make sure there were no interruptions, so I sent Larry and his dogs into the bar from the exit by the bathrooms. Vavoom collapsed on the stage and announced she could not go on. When Mike and Kevin came out to tell me about their plight, the guys at the back bar erupted, "*What Vavoom wants, Vavoom gets.*"

At the Talkhouse on Collins Avenue in South Beach, which was opened in August 1992 and closed in April 1995, there were pranks as well. The front-of-house mixer was located on top of our walk-in refrigerator behind the main bar. You had to climb up a ladder to get there. We had a young (around 21) sound engineer named Jens that assisted Drew.

I arrived from New York and climbed up to introduce myself. The comedienne Judy Tenuta was performing. The audience was overwhelmingly male and gay.

I shook Jens's hand and stood next to him. I pressed closer and closer, staring straight ahead. Then I took his hand. I squeezed it and rubbed my fingers against his palm. Jens looked terrified and suddenly jumped straight up in the air and fell down—before I informed him it was a joke.

**Scott Slevinski:** Peter always tries to prank everybody, and get it on camera for the Talkhouse birthday party. I ended up not falling for it. But he called me: “Dan Tooker’s car broke down, you’ve got to go pick him up.” He gave me the address where the car was, and I was traveling down some dirt road going, “What the fuck is going on?” All of a sudden, in the middle of this dirt road, there was a girl in a bikini holding a red cup, jumping up and down trying to wave me down. I was like, “This is definitely one of Peter’s pranks.”

I called Dan: “Your car is not here.” He said, “No, no, it is, turn around.”

“No, I know what this is. Andrea is in the woods with Peter, with a video camera.”

“Why did you stop? It would have been so funny!”

**Tommy LaGrassa:** But when the shoe is on the other foot, it’s not so fun, my friend.

We were in Cuba, and had a long bus ride. Actually, the last year, we flew from Havana all the way to Guantanamo Bay, the eastern part of the country. We flew down and then, like ballplayers, we had a bus and played ball all the way back, in all the major cities, until we got back to Havana.

We were on our way back to Havana, a long, seven-hour ride. I had nothing to do but think, how am I gonna sting Peter? Because he stung me a few times over the years. You heard



about the bumper stickers? “Honk if you’re a boy and think I’m cute.” He put it on all the macho guys’ cars—Chris Carney, Paul Cleary.

I decided the only way I could get Peter was to go to the weak link: his vanity. Peter would love more than anything else to have a one-on-one meeting with Fidel Castro. That was my sting.

Peter also went to Cuba without the Maidstoners. He went on this other trip and brought famous American ex-players, like Maury Wills. So I used that. By now, we were friendly with the Cuban teams we were playing, so I got the manager of the team we were playing to tell Peter that “*El Jefe*, the Commander, Fidel, heard about this American who was here last year with Maury Wills. He’s a Maury Wills fan, and he wants to meet Peter!” I told everyone, all the Maidstoners. But Peter wasn’t telling anyone, he wasn’t telling us.

I got everyone to meet. They were all dressed up to go out to dinner, and Peter thought he was going to this big, fancy hotel, to go to the 21st floor to meet Fidel. The way we knew Peter had taken the bait was that he said to the manager, Alamo, “Should I wear a tie?” I was telling all the Maidstoners, and we were laughing for three days before this thing ever happened.

Sure enough, Alamo took Peter on a wild goose chase, trying to find El Jefe. He said, “You’ve got to understand, a meeting with El Jefe is very difficult.” Meanwhile, we needed that time so everyone could shower and get dressed after the game. I got all of us to leave our hotel and be at the hotel where Peter thought he was going to meet Fidel. We were all hiding, all 30 of us, behind these big columns.

Peter came in with Alamo and the manager, thinking he’s going to the elevator. We all jumped out, “*El Jefe!*” Peter just looked at me.

He doesn't like to talk about it. He'll probably try to get you to edit it out of the book.

### **Thirty-five: Frippertronics**

**Ray Ledda:** I'll tell you a story about the one band I ever suggested here. I was a big Robert Fripp fan. Peter was saying, "Should I get this guy Robert Fripp?" I'm like, "Absolutely."

He hired Fripp and paid him a lot of money, and Fripp got onstage and there was only, like, 30 people here. The show was a bomb in terms of money, but everybody here was obviously a Fripp fan, King Crimson and all that.

Fripp proceeded to stand on the stage, and he had a computer in front of him. He had the guitar, and he was programming the computer with all these Frippertronics—loops and everything like that. At one point he just left the stage, and he sat down at the bar. I was sitting next to him. There was no one onstage, but this wall of music was coming at you.

Peter walked in and said, "Where the fuck is Fripp?"

And he goes, "I'm Fripp!"

"What the hell is going on?"

Peter never took my word for suggesting another band again. Everyone was mesmerized, and everyone loved it. Except for Peter.

### **Twenty-nine: 2001**

**Peter Honerkamp:** September 11th came and changed America.

Normally, we only do a few national acts off-season as there just aren't enough folks out here. But after 9/11 there were not only more people out here, the people who were here wanted to get out. That fall Taj Mahal, Jimmy Cliff, Shelby Lynne, and Lyle Lovett were some of the major acts that played, Lyle Lovett turning down bigger offers in New York City to play two shows in a small room.

### **Thirty: The Rest is History**

**Brandy:** It was 11:30 p.m., November third, my first night in the Hamptons—I'm from Detroit, I had never been here. I had just come for a job interview, but I'd heard about the Talkhouse, so I poked my head in. I thought he was beautiful, and I begged him to stay open for my birthday. And I don't even drink.

**Eiji Shiga:** Only two people in the bar. On a Sunday night in 2002, the night before her birthday. That's where I met my wife. A cold autumn night, no crowd.

**Brandy:** I wanted you to stay open, you were closing.

**Eiji Shiga:** But I ended up staying open. There was a picture of Janis Joplin on the wall, so she got up on stage and sang "Me and Bobby McGee." She has an incredible voice. And the rest is history.

**Brandy:** Oh, thank you! And we danced.

**Eiji Shiga:** We danced.

**Brandy:** We danced to “Purple Rain.”

**Eiji Shiga:** The funny thing about that story is that she came in at 11:30. At 10 o’clock, Peter and I were shooting the shit, and on Sundays he used to not close the bar for the whole winter because he said that keeping open on Sunday is kind of fighting against the week to start, for people who were like, “I don’t want the weekend to end.” Even if no one came in, he thought that being open was a romantic idea. So on Sundays, he stayed open.

At 10 o’clock, he said, “Eiji, I’ll give you \$100 if you can get a girl down here to hang out.”

I said, “Peter, I think I’m going to lose that bet, buddy,” and an hour later, she came walking in with one other girl, and I met my wife.

*Did you get the hundred bucks?*

**Eiji Shiga:** I did not get my hundred bucks.

### **Thirty-eight: Amazing Grace**

**John Hynan:** We were probably going to Stephen Talkhouse from the time we bought the house in East Quogue in ’93, ’94. For a while we were deemed the most traveled, farthest-away patrons.

When we first started going, we would always buy a table, watch the show, and leave. I got to meet one fellow that was a regular there, Jerry the garbage man—I don't even know his last name. He was a friend of Larry and Phil.

**Joann Pauley:** John was riding his motorcycle on the back roads around East Hampton and Amagansett. A garbage truck passed him going in the opposite direction, made a U-turn, and started chasing after him, trying to flag him down. John didn't know why, and pulled over. Jerry jumped out and said, "Man, I want to see that bike," and a friendship began.

We'd see Jerry at the Talkhouse. He used to sit at the end of the bar by the low wall, and one night he gave us his seats. He told us these were the best seats in the house. From the first time we sat there, we knew this was the place for us. When at all possible, we'd try to get there early enough to sit in those seats. After dozens and dozens of shows in the same spot, and after arriving early and getting to know Phil and Larry and the rest of the bartenders, we all became friends. The best part about getting to the Talkhouse early was that we'd have time to talk and laugh together before the crowds came.

**John Hynan:** We hooked up with Larry one summer during a dog-training session—Larry was in the session with Lola.

**Joann Pauley:** I think he came straight from work.

**John Hynan:** Most likely!

**Joann Pauley:** The session was at, like, nine in the morning.

**John Hynan:** I introduced myself—“You’re the bartender from the Talkhouse” and all. He had passes with him, and gave us some. That was how we started hanging at the bar more, instead of at the tables.

**Joann Pauley:** Our birthdays are close on the calendar—John’s is June 30th, and mine is July 4th. During one of our visits in June, Phil asked me to write down our names—we didn’t know what it was for. When we got to the Talkhouse for an Aaron Neville show, Phil was outside and brought us to our seats. The area was all decorated—it had one of those red, white and blue bunting banners hanging from the bar by our seats, our seats were all decorated, and there was a ribbon covering the bar itself. They said, “Take off the ribbon,” and under the ribbon was this huge brass plaque screwed directly onto the bar with our names on it! What a true honor! They are the nicest, most thoughtful friends we have. This plaque means the world to us, although my mother would probably rather I had a plaque on a church pew!

I wrote a thank-you note to the Talkhouse family and used an Elvis postage stamp on the envelope. Phil framed the note and envelope and it’s hanging on the beam by our seats. There are many more plaques to other members of the Talkhouse family, but as far as we know, we’re the only living recipients of the honor. What a truly great place, we’re very fortunate to have found it.

At the same birthday party where we were given the plaque, Larry got me helium balloons. He and I inhaled the helium and went upstairs to the green room. Aaron Neville, whose signature song is “Amazing Grace,” was sitting in an armchair after his set. Larry and I stood over him and sang the first few bars of “Amazing Grace” and just giggled and ran back downstairs. The next day, when I realized what we had done, I was mortified. I don’t think he’s

been back since. But it certainly was one of my most memorable birthdays ever! For the next Christmas, I bought Larry a CD of the Neville Brothers that included “our” song.

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Big Bad Voodoo Daddy—that was fun. They came marching across the street from, I think, Meeting House.

**Peter Honerkamp:** The last time the power went out was in August 2003 for Big Bad Voodoo Daddy and the blackout took out the whole Northeast. There was no time to get generators that night so the show was rescheduled for October, only with all proceeds going to the family of John Fernandez, a young man who was badly injured serving our country in Iraq.

### **Thirty-nine: Soldier Ride**

**Chris Carney:** I am from Centerville, Iowa. I moved here when I was 10 years old, so I’m sort of a transplant. I went to high school here, went to college in North Carolina. Came back from college and started playing rugby in ’91.

It was through the rugby guys that I found the Talkhouse. Some of the older guys—Paul Cleary—had just started working at the bar. We came in on his wings, so to speak. From that point, there got to be more and more of us.

From Peter’s standpoint, I think, instead of kicking us out of there, he hired us. It turned into a half-dozen guys from the rugby team working in the Talkhouse. We would have our rugby

parties there and stuff like that. Everyone would always end up there eventually, anyway. I worked there from the early '90s until 2004.

I was working at the Talkhouse when Peter had a benefit for a guy from Long Island, John Fernandez, who got wounded in Iraq. We raised a little bit of money but there was overhead.

**Nick Kraus:** It was 2003, when the northeast blackout hit. We had a show that was supposed to happen here, a Thursday in August. It got postponed, and the makeup date was, like, a Wednesday in the fall. Peter came up with the idea after reading an article in *Newsday* about John Fernandez, a guy from Rocky Point that lost both his legs. Everybody felt good about doing that little fund-raiser for him, we met the family. That's how we heard about Wounded Warrior Project.

**Tek Vakaloloma:** There were a couple of local guys—John Fernandez, Ian Lennon, and Hector Delgado—that got injured in Iraq. They live up the Island a bit, but we knew who they were. They were struggling, had young families, and we thought we'd try to do something to help them out. Peter put on a big benefit concert for them. We raised a good amount of money for them and their families. But because of the number of people, we had to do it at the Patchogue Theater. We raised quite a bit of money, but after everything was paid off, like the theater. . . .

**Nick Kraus:** We heard about more guys from Long Island that had gotten hurt. At the same time, Peter and I were looking at how to use whatever talents we had to find ways to make more money. We were looking at taking over some shows at Bald Hill, in Farmingville, and the



Patchogue Theatre, doing bookings for those two venues. None of which ever really happened, but we did one sort-of test show at the Patchogue Theater.

We got the Commitments, Seven Nations, and the Nancy Atlas Project to play. The thinking was, “redone old classic theater, Main Street in Patchogue.” My thinking was, because it was the middle of Long Island, where you’ve got a million more people to work with, and also for a good cause, it was a no-brainer, it would sell really well.

But not that many people in that neck of the woods knew who Nancy Atlas was, and nobody knew or gave a shit who Nick Kraus was as a promoter. Also, you’ve got three shows that appeal to different kinds of people. Usually, when you do a triple booking of shows, you want things that really complement each other. Having a Sixties nostalgia band from the movie, Seven Nations—a progressive newer band—and Nancy, who has a local following, it didn’t necessarily appeal to everybody for everything.

And it wasn’t selling very well. For all the work we were doing, it looked like we were only going to sell 800 tickets—the theater held 1,600. The first 500 were to pay the cost of the theater and the bands, for the posters and all the other stuff. At the end of the day, even if you had 800 people, with the expenses involved you were really going to make your money *after* selling 800 tickets. For all the work we were putting into it—and the risk—the payoff was going to be minor, especially split between three wounded warriors.

That’s when Chris came up with the idea.

**Tek Vakaloloma:** It was a great success, but then one night, we were sitting here, and Peter said, “I need to find a way to maximize the inputs and minimize the output.”

**Chris Carney:** After the benefit, we were sitting around late night, after way too many cocktails. The week before, I had done a multiple sclerosis ride in the city where they had thousands of people do a 60-mile ride. I said, “What if, instead of having thousands of riders do a short distance, what if one rider goes thousands of miles, and see if we can get the same type of sponsorship?”

**Tek Vakaloloma:** Chris, who’s like my brother, said, “I’ll ride my bike across the country.” And I said, “If you go, I’ll go with you.” That’s how it came about. Chris and me, from Montauk to San Diego.

**Chris Carney:** I thought it was a far-fetched idea that would be laughed at and quickly dismissed. And Peter actually took me up on it. He said, “Wait a second, that could work.” The next thing you knew, I was riding my bike across the country.

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Initially, Peter had some fund-raisers at the bar. We figured out how much it would cost to do the trip. We came up with a number—I think it was about \$50,000 to rent the RV, hotels and stuff. We said, “If we raise that money by a certain point in the summer we’ll do it. If we don’t get to that money, whatever we *have* raised we’ll donate to them.”

Just through putting an empty jar at the door of the Talkhouse, we got to that mark. It was kind of scary, because it went from being an idea to something I actually had to do. I opened my mouth in front of Peter, and of course between Peter and Nick, and hiring PR people, the next

thing you knew radio ads were being taken out, I was doing interviews on the radio. I was telling the whole town I was going to do it, so now I *had* to.

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**Peter Honerkamp:** John Melia was a Marine who was in a helicopter that caught fire and exploded over the Red Sea off the coast of Somalia in 1992. Four of his friends were killed, and he was one of 14 wounded, suffering burns over 20 percent of his body.

**Chris Carney:** John Melia had a \$10,000-a-year budget and a one-room office in Roanoke, Virginia. When guys first started getting hurt in Iraq, he would show up to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center with a backpack filled with comfort items—stuff he wished he would have had when he was hurt. A pair of shorts, t-shirt, sweatpants—the most luxurious thing you would find would probably be an old-school Walkman. That was the Wounded Warrior Project.

When Peter did the benefit for John Fernandez, we asked him, who should be the beneficiary, who had really helped him? He was the one who said the Wounded Warrior Project. He gave us John Melia's phone number. We got in touch with him and he invited us down to Walter Reed. We got to follow him around while he handed out backpacks to these guys.

**Nick Kraus:** The first time I went to Walter Reed, I went with Chris and Peter and Reggie and James. I'll never forget that day, because I was always scared to go to the hospital, for anything. Luckily I've been healthy enough not to have to go many times for myself except for stupid, fall-down-the-stairs kind of stuff. Even when my sister had her appendix taken out, I

was scared to go to the hospital, because I'd just get freaked out about sick people. I was terrified. But I was there with friends and we were going for the right reasons, so I said I would go.

**Chris Carney:** As soon as the elevator doors opened on the floor, my heart dropped to my stomach. Here we were, three guys from a bar. We walked into Walter Reed and instantly it was like, "Someone's got to stop this." We were surprised that we got invited—just from having this idea at four a.m. at the Talkhouse, suddenly I was being let into Walter Reed, I was walking past generals, I was walking into kids' rooms that were 18, 19 years old and had lost their legs. The gravity and seriousness of where we were was such a sledgehammer.

**Nick Kraus:** I was horrified, because everyone there is twenty-something years old, if that, and blown up. It was amazing, how young everybody was. I was 32 at the time, and after working in nightclubs since I was 18, to see people I would card, or not even believe their ID because they looked so young, already coming back from defending our country and being in charge of million-dollar weapons systems, and having the ability to kill people, or maybe they *have*, and almost been killed themselves. . . .

I was prepared for the worst thing you could ever see and for it being really depressing. And there's obviously a sad element to it, but what struck me the most was that everybody's attitude was just so positive. It really struck me. People were thanking us for coming to see them, and we hadn't even done anything, except one little fund-raiser here and a couple thousand dollars. They were just appreciative that we were there, thanking Chris and us for organizing this bicycle ride. It was amazing.

And then you walked in the next room and there was a guy that worked at the post office, and he had all these cards up all over the place. He had lost at least one leg and was completely dazed. I'm surprised they let us into the room, but we had special access to places because we were with John Melia.

He was older than me. I asked him how come he had so many notes already from people. They were all from people that he served along his mail route. That just crushed me. I walked out of there, kept it together, but as soon as I got in a cab in D.C., I fell apart, definitely. That's when I knew that I was committed. There are a million things you can do to try and help people out or make things better, whether it's the homeless, AIDS, cancer, stray cats. And all those are good causes, but I knew what I was going to be doing after that day.

**Chris Carney:** I just kept feeling in the beginning that someone was going to realize that we had no business being there—it was way too serious a place. But then you met the guys, the kids and everyone involved, and we became galvanized, and all of a sudden there was no turning back. We had to succeed, we had to really come through. We came back from that trip a lot more committed.

**Nick Kraus:** The takeaway also was that I went into it coming from a fairly privileged family—not by Hamptons standards, but compared to the country and the rest of the world. My father was in the army, but we were not a “military family.” I always just thought, these are people that like to go shoot things and kill people. That was always my take, coming from a middle-of-the-road but kind of liberal family in Greenwich Village, New York, where you think anybody who was in the Marines was a knucklehead. Not that they weren't good at what they did, and not that I'm not proud to be an American, but probably from too many movies and stuff.

It was “kill, kill, kill, let’s go shoot things up.” And there is that part to it, but these are mainly people that are trying to do the right thing for the country, and to make their lives better, and for many people it’s a way of life and an opportunity to make themselves better and learn something, to pick up a skill or a trade. And go see the world.

As I went along, I was really taken by everyone’s commitment, dedication, the camaraderie among these folks that you don’t see anywhere else. A lot of them were very pleasant and smart—more pleasant and smart than I am, or ever will be. And their sacrifice was more than I could ever give. That’s why it’s embarrassing when people thank me, even 10 years into this, for anything I’ve ever done, because I wouldn’t trade having to wait at a train station to pick somebody up, or make flyers, or sit through some boring meetings, or throw a party, or do a bicycle ride, for one minute of getting shot at in Afghanistan.

**Chris Carney:** Nick went on the PR machine, getting radio spots and this and that, and Peter would get up in front of the audience at the Talkhouse every night before he would introduce the act and explain what we were doing and that there was a jar out front.

Being in the Hamptons, we had access to a bit more celebrity status and stuff, and a couple people came on board early that really made a big difference. A patron or two from the Talkhouse wrote a significant check. Alec Baldwin did a public service announcement for us, which really, really helped. And Tony Snow, the old White House press secretary, before that he had a radio show for Fox News. There was a Fox News person at Nichol’s restaurant that got wind of it—Nichol’s was a big supporter—and he plugged us into Tony Snow. I got a phone call out of the blue saying, “Call this guy Tony Snow. Call from a landline.” I didn’t know who he was.

I was at a friend's house after work having a beer, and called him up. I had no idea how big he really was. I was talking with him for, like, 10 minutes, explaining why I got involved and what we were doing, and Tony decided to make us one of his causes.

I kept training all summer, and the next thing you knew, it came to the end of the summer and we did the ride.

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Tek said he would drive the RV. I think he thought it would be a great way to see the country, which I'm sure it was, but I don't think he realized it would be at 20 miles per hour! He drove the RV, but he drove behind me or would leapfrog me, stuff like that. At times, when we had a bunch of people join us and he could talk someone into driving for a little while, he would hop out and jump on a bike as well. He did a lot of legs when that was the case.

**Tek Vakaloloma:** I tell you, I wouldn't trade it for anything. It was one of the pinnacle things in my life that I knew I'd never forget. The first time, just the two of us, it took six or seven weeks, but we had to time it going across the country. We were ahead of schedule so we hung out in Arizona for a few days.

**Chris Carney:** Tek was unbelievable, he was such a good manager, an offensive-lineman type. He shunned the spotlight, the cameras, and just did everything that was needed, whether it was getting the guys' laundry together or running down dinner after everyone was done and we'd checked into the hotel, stuff like that. He was a selfless individual.

When I did the ride, every Thursday I would call in the morning and Tony Snow would plug us in on the air: “Where are you now, Chris?” He just kept pumping it up, and next thing you knew we were on CNN. It just blew up.

Before the ride, we had raised, like, \$75,000, but as soon as I finished, with the media splash that happened it got so big we went up over a million. For John Melia, who had this little one-room office in Roanoke, all of a sudden he had stuff he was able to do.

At different points in the ride, he would have a wounded soldier come and join me for a weekend, both for press as well as, I think, to keep up my morale and remind me why I was doing it.

Two guys joined me in Colorado for a weekend, Heath Calhoun and Ryan Kelley, both amputees. We had a great time, they were there for the weekend and rode each day with me for a little bit, and we had dinner and drinks and we got to be buddies over the course of the weekend.

As I left and kept riding toward San Diego, they got to talking. They joined me in San Diego when we finished and asked if I’d be interested in doing a ride going back the other way—they wanted to do the whole ride. I had no sooner finished the first one and they hit me with that, and Tony Snow said Fox would back us if we did it. As soon as we finished the first ride we started planning the second one. That’s when it morphed from a fund-raiser to a rehabilitative event.

**Nick Kraus:** I started filming the first year, and we had all this footage that I thought would be a great short film. It was neat package: Chris gets on the bike, rides across country.



You've got your beginning and middle, and then end with the glory of him finishing in California. The problem was that it kept going, because at the end of that ride, after riding with Ryan and Heath, they decided they wanted to ride again. All of a sudden my neat, little short film turned into something that still exists today.

**Chris Carney:** We came back with those guys—it was Heath, Ryan and I. Ryan was a single-leg amputee and rode a regular bike with his prosthetic, and Heath was a double-leg amputee and he rode a hand cycle. I watched him ride his hand cycle across the desert, over the Rockies. It was just amazing.

The occupational therapist at Walter Reed started sending us different guys for rehab, in their home state or just when they had time off. About every week we would get someone new for a couple of days, sometimes longer. By the time it finished, we had ridden with over 35 soldiers who were all wounded.

Instead of going straight to Montauk from L.A., we went to D.C. That's when Bush invited us to the White House, which was pretty amazing. Then we went to Walter Reed, and rode from Walter Reed to Montauk with that crew—there were like 12 of us.

**Reg Cornelia:** The Soldier Ride was certainly among the most memorable things I've ever gotten involved in. I met so many great people. The first year Chris went across, I helped Peter a little bit setting it up.

**Tek Vakaloloma:** I had some adventures out there—Chris and I being given the Presidential Medal at the White House from George Bush for doing it. It's crazy! People back in New Zealand said, "You met the *president*?" "Yeah, man, at the White House!" It was pretty surreal. And you'd meet a lot of dignitaries and whatnot along the way.

What got me the most was, those young soldiers, generals and captains would come up and shake my hand: “Thank you, sir.” Don’t call me ‘sir!’ I didn’t do it for that. I did it because it was the right thing to do.

**Chris Carney:** We slowly realized the power it had as a rehabilitative event. For a lot of the guys, everything takes longer in the slow-motion world of having an injury: getting dressed takes longer, taking a shower takes longer, eating takes longer. You get on a bike and go down a hill and the wind is in your face, and you have a little bit of that feeling like you were 12 years old. To drag these guys through back roads and everywhere else and make them sweat—they’re all athletic guys, but a lot of them hadn’t done anything athletic since they were wounded—and just to make fun of each other, have a good, hard day on the road and a couple beers and some pizza at the end of the day in a hotel room was nice, it was bonding for everyone. We realized the power of that.

That’s where Soldier Ride ended up becoming a program of the Wounded Warrior Project. They kind of absorbed Soldier Ride and became the rehabilitative wing of that. The Wounded Warrior Project today is the number-one veterans care organization in the country. And it all happened through the Talkhouse. Peter is an “action” guy: he took the idea and made it happen.

**Reg Cornelia:** In the spring of the following year, ’05, Peter said to me, “I can’t find a driver. They’re going to ride with Chris across the country and I don’t have anybody to drive the van.”

I said, “Yes, you do.”

You know Peter, he has no patience: “*Don’t fucking tell me I have someone! I don’t!*”

I said, “No, you have someone. You’ve got me.” I had just started a job.

He said, “What are you going to do about your job?”

I said, “If they don’t give me a leave of absence, I’ll quit.” So I went. I did the ’05 cross-country trip, and the ’06. I could spend hours talking about the experiences we had.

**Nick Kraus:** I kept filming everything as we went along—we filmed extensively in 2004, 2005—and then it all sat in a box. Life got in the way personally, business got busier, Wounded Warrior got huge.

I was on parts of all three cross-country rides, and I’ve gone on more of the Soldier Rides and kept the transition going as Chris got married and had kids. Peter has stayed involved, but I’ve been involved in all the other rides that aren’t directly involved with us. I’ve kept my foot in the door on a lot of those just to keep an eye on where it’s going. Sometimes they listen to me, sometimes they don’t. But it’s good to be part of it and see what’s happening.

**Tek Vakaloloma:** Now, because it got so big, it’s syndicated—there’s a ride out here every year, there’s a ride in Florida. Everyone controls their own pace.

**Nick Kraus:** At the very beginning, there wasn’t much to it. Myself, Peter, Chris, Tek, Reggie and the rest of the crew were, I guess, instrumental in getting them their first large chunks of exposure and therefore money, and gave them some of the tools to be able to bring themselves to where they are now, which I still play a part in as far as working on certain fundraising aspects and the Soldier Rides themselves, whether they’re out here or across the country or England, Israel. There are three teams now, West Coast, Central and East Coast. They’re in

Germany now, too. They're doing Hawaii, all these cool things. It's pretty amazing to see where it's gone.

They're going to be doing a mountain-bike variation of the same thing, and other countries are doing similar rides. It's really changed the way everybody looks at rehabilitation, and how the American public can look at how we treat our vets. And it gives them an opportunity to say thank you, as Peter likes to say.

**Chris Carney:** We were in England in 2013. We brought 15 Americans over and rode with about 15 British wounded. We did a weeklong tour of the coast of England and then went over to Normandy together, which was spectacular. Peter's got a ride in Israel that they did.

It's interesting for us to see how other countries treat their wounded—some better, some not—and hopefully they learn from each other. We're all in it together. When you start off, the guys are totally separate, sitting at opposite ends, and throughout the course of the ride everyone knows each other and you can't tell who's who if you can't hear them talk.

**Nick Kraus:** As we're coming on 10 years, it occurred to me that, all this stuff can sit here in this box, or we can go full circle on where we are 10 years later. That being, Wounded Warrior Project goes from \$12,000 in their bank account to doing \$200 million this year helping thousands of injured veterans across the country and the world.

**Tek Vakaloloma:** None of us were veterans, we were just stupid enough. A lot of people asked me why I did it, not being an American. To me, it was the humane thing to do, it shouldn't matter what race, color. And it was an adventure! It really was. And now it's turned into this massive, global thing. Like Peter says, we've changed the way the veterans get taken care of. It's crazy: some local guys like us, and now it's this massive, worldwide thing.

**Chris Carney:** I look back very nostalgically at my years at the Talkhouse. If it wasn't for Peter, Soldier Ride never would have happened. If it wasn't for Soldier Ride, I wouldn't have had a lot of opportunities I've had after that. It's funny, the strange twists that things take.

I never would have thought that working the door at a bar would be one of the better career choices I've ever made, but it really was! But it's not *any* bar.

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**Michael Buquicchio:** The Talkhouse is great at doing charity work. It really is amazing, how much they do, especially with the Soldier Ride. Every summer they have the soldiers come here. We have a blast with them, and we really take good care of them.

Nick Kraus always uses this, but it *is* my story—he said if he ever wrote a book, he'd write it. It was one of my first summers working here. The soldiers are always very respectful guys, but when you're drinking all day, maybe you get a little out of line, like anyone would.

**Nick Kraus:** In the last three or four years it's been over 100 degrees on the day of the ride out here. The whole trip has been unbearably, record-breaking hot, and oddly, three of the last four years it's been the hottest day of the year for two of the three days we ride.

After the New York City ride, the Babylon-to-Jones-Beach ride, and then the Hamptons ride, it was 100 degrees, and I'd been up 20 or 22 hours a day because I was starting at six in the morning there and coming back and working nights at the Talkhouse. After the Rock the Farm event, on the Saturday night of the ride, we'd carve out a little separate area for the warriors outside, in the back. That way, they're not dealing with too many people—for a lot of warriors

there are issues with post-traumatic stress disorder. You need to be in an environment you can kind of control, and to be around a bunch of drunk, pushy New Yorkers—who I love dearly—might be a little overwhelming, with really loud music and surroundings you're not familiar with. Also, for the folks with mobility issues, it makes the most sense to carve out a little outdoor area that was all their own. That way they'd have easy access to bathrooms, easy access to get back on the bus, etc.

It was probably one of Mike Buquicchio's first years. At the time, Mike's a 22-year-old guy, six-foot-five, two-hundred-something pounds, in shape, rock solid, and one of the nicest guys you've ever met. His job was to watch the back. He was keeping an eye on everybody, making sure people weren't sneaking in around the back. He wasn't even there to watch the warriors—they were basically friends of the house.

All the warriors *always* get along great. Out of over 100 rides I've done, which involve 20 to 60 warriors over 10 years on each ride, sometimes together for a month but generally for three, four, or five days, I've never seen a warrior get into a fight with another warrior, ever. But these two guys, I guess, had been on each other's tail from the beginning. They got into an argument, probably over a girl. Generally, that's what that is.

**Michael Buquicchio:** I guess two wounded warriors got into a little bit of an argument. One guy had a prosthetic leg, and another had a prosthetic arm, but I didn't know that. I saw the two of them wrestling around on the ground out back, and I went to break it up.

**Nick Kraus:** Mike grabbed one guy, who was going after the guy with a prosthetic leg, by the arm. When he did, the guy's entire arm came right off in Mike's hand.

**Michael Buquicchio:** Apparently, the look on my face was sheer terror for about 10 seconds as I was holding an arm in my hand.

**Nick Kraus:** The look on his face—holding this guy’s arm in his hand, 10 feet away from him now—was pretty priceless. It was a really good prosthetic, so when you grabbed it you wouldn’t necessarily know, especially in the heat of the moment. All of a sudden, arm was *here* and guy was over *there*. That defused the whole situation pretty quickly. But I’ve never seen anything like it, before or since.

**Michael Buquicchio:** Dan Aykroyd was there that night, and he gave me an odd look. About 10 minutes later, I gave the guy his arm back. I helped him get it re-attached and helped the other guy, with a prosthetic leg, get back up on his chair, and we all had a drink together. It worked out. We all had a laugh about it. That was an interesting night.

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*Epilogue*

**Nick Kraus:** Getting an understanding of what people care about when they don’t know who you are is something I learned a lot, that first year. To get any kind of groundswell of support, it’s got to come through people that you know. It’s something I try and do with promotion: I can post to 5,000 people that “This is happening,” but because I do it all the time, nobody really cares about it. I can be like, “Gary Clark Jr., you’ve got to see him, he’s amazing.” I can go up to individuals and say, “You should see this guy, and here’s a free ticket! I’m not

going to make money off this, I just want you to see this guy play.” And god, I was right, he’s playing with the Rolling Stones now, and everybody else. But it’s like pulling teeth.

It was the same thing when we finished the ride in San Diego: “It’s a military town, there’s this base, that base, I’ll just go around to the bases. . . .” First of all, you can’t even get *on* the base. I didn’t realize that until I drove up to them with a stack of flyers, and you give them to somebody and they probably throw them in the garbage. Now I know, you’ve got to find a person on the base that’s part of Community Affairs or whatever, and maybe they get it out there, maybe they don’t.

Long story short, we finished the ride, we’d gotten enough food and beer and all sorts of stuff for, like, 500 people, and maybe 50 showed up outside of our group. So I ended up with, like, 30 extra cases of Heineken. And I was a big beer drinker, particularly then, so I was like, “I can’t leave it here.”

I brought it all back to my room after many trips back and forth in this van, and dropped it off. My girlfriend, who flew out to see me, already thought I was an idiot. Over the next day-and-a-half, I was giving cases of beer to the guy in the hallway, etc. I was still at, like, eight cases of beer and said, “Fuck it, I’ll bring them back to New York with me.”

We got to the airport, dropped off the rental car—this is so dumb—and I think we were at six cases, plus all my luggage, and all her stuff. She was like, “I’m not helping you.” She weighed, like, 100 pounds, a rich country-club girl from Kansas City.

“I can do it myself, I don’t need your help.” And the cases were falling over. It was five o’clock in the morning.



I got all the beer on the shuttle van, got dropped off at the airport, she went walking in, and I'd carry them from here to there, and keep running back and forth so nothing was too far away from me.

I finally got to check-in, and they were like, "You know that each additional box is \$40." Well shit, a case of beer is like \$25. Meanwhile, because I'd knocked a whole bunch of them over in my haste and clumsiness, there was beer spraying out of the boxes and leaking all over the place. They were like, "You can't leave this here."

I said, "I'm gonna leave it here, because I don't know where else to put it."

That's sort of how I roll. I've gotten a little smarter. Not much.

## **Forty: Everybody's Music Just Flowed**

**Billboard:** *Paul Simon gave a surprise performance at a benefit for local musician Sean Rafferty last night (Aug. 29) at the Stephen Talkhouse in Amagansett, N.Y. Rafferty has performed regularly with various bands at the small Eastern Long Island club. Last week, he had surgery to remove a tumor, but biopsy results are not known yet.*

*During last night's set, Simon performed such classics as "Homeward Bound," "America," "The Boxer" and "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard." Approximately \$18,000 was raised for Rafferty's medical treatment.*

**Ken Rafferty:** The best show we can remember is the one Paul Simon did for Sean. Ronnie and I had worked for him, and Ronnie called him up and told him. Paul said, “Sure, just tell me where and what time.”

**Ron Rafferty:** When my brother got sick and I talked to Peter about doing a benefit, I told him I wanted to give Paul a call and see if he’d do it. Peter said, “That’s a great idea.” Someone was playing on a Sunday night and had cancelled. Peter said, “You’re in luck. You can have Sunday night.”

I called Paul. It was August 29, because on August 28, Edie Brickell was playing at Guild Hall, and that was the only reason he was in town. He said, “I’m leaving right after the show, but I’ll stay one more night.”

**Ken Rafferty:** I guess that was only a week before it was going to happen. We decided not to advertise it, it was going to be word of mouth, only local people. Only \$15 to get in, you’re going to see two bands plus Paul Simon do however many songs he wanted to do. I think he did five.

The place was packed. You couldn’t move left and right. They had renovated the Talkhouse and put all those new windows in so they could close them and put air conditioning on. That night, it was so packed, the air conditioners weren’t doing anything, and they opened all the windows. So now you had 500 or more people out in the street, listening to it or watching.

Paul came on. He had just come back from being on tour so he was kind of losing his voice. One of the songs he was singing, he asked everybody to sing the chorus. They got in on it, and after the song was over he said, “I want to buy everybody in the place a beer.” People

applauded, and he said, “I’m serious.” He saw Peter and said, “It’s on my tab,” so everybody in the place got a drink.

**Paul Cleary:** That was such a friggin’ great night. That was someone else that said, “Right, I’m buying everyone a drink. The next round is on me.”

**George Bakke:** What was memorable was, we were all singing along with him. He stopped and said that we were “un-fucking-believable.” He stopped in the middle of a song and said, “I’m buying a round for everybody.” I don’t remember the exact words, but he stopped in the middle. It was a little foul-mouthed.

I was there singing. For whatever reason, everybody in there that was singing sounded perfect. That’s why he stopped—it was not a bunch of mumbling, it was articulating the words. Everybody’s music just flowed. Unbelievable.

**Ken Rafferty:** He went upstairs, and we went upstairs to see him. Peter came in and he said to Peter, “Here’s my credit card.” And Peter said, “No, you don’t buy nothing here. All those drinks are on me.” Peter even gave all the money they made from the bar—not only the door, but the bar—to Sean. He did good. He helped him out, because Sean couldn’t work or anything. I don’t know how much we raised, it was an incredible amount of money. That was a really nice thing that went on there.

**Matt Dauch:** Paul Simon killed it at Sean’s benefit. He played all the hits. I asked him if he needed accompaniment, because he was waiting for his son. He got here, bands were playing. He was upstairs, and I could tell he was like, “Where’s my son?”

And I said, “I guess it’s time for you, they’re wondering if you want to play now.”

And he was like, “I’m waiting for my son, I was with him, we went out to dinner.”

I said, “Listen, if you need some accompaniment or anything. . . .” He looked at me like, “What the fuck are you . . . do you know who I am?” It was so bad! I went downstairs thinking, I am such a tool. . . .

**Peter “Bosco” Michne:** That was awesome. I’d worked at Paul’s house with Ronnie Rafferty, with a landscaping crew. Ronnie hooked that up. I would never have had the balls to ask somebody like that to do something like that. That was one of the best nights ever.

### **Forty-one: Close Up**

**Suzanne Vega:** I’ve been playing here since the mid-Nineties. I’ve probably played here more than 20 times. For a while, it was twice a year.

We did a “Live from the Stephen Talkhouse” CD in 2004. It was going to be a DVD—my brother filmed it. That was a nice memento of what we were doing at that moment in time. The CD is available, I sell it on my website. My brother took the cover—it’s a picture of me coming up the stairs here.

It’s so comfortable here. It’s got a nice, rich history. It’s really good to get feedback for whatever the current project is, and people remember and come year to year. One year, I tried out a lot of stuff for a play that I had written and did a bunch of songs from that. People remembered that the next year. I was talking to some people outside and they were like, “We came last year

and really loved it and you really rocked, so we're back," and they wanted to know what happened with the play. Whatever I'm working on, I know I can float it here.

**Glenn Tilbrook:** When Squeeze got back together in 2007, we were thinking we'd be doing bigger places. We've done Roseland, we've done the Beacon. In London, we've done the Royal Albert Hall—with an orchestra, for the Teenage Cancer Trust. It's amazing to do those gigs, but it confirmed to me that I want to keep doing *this* as well. I really like the freedom you have at a show like this. It is really important to how you grow, and how you develop all the time. I'm comfortable with my past, and I'm comfortable with my future, but you're not going to go onstage at the Royal Albert Hall and experiment. At the Talkhouse, you can go on stage and experiment, and be relaxed enough about it and feel like you know your audience enough to be able to do that.

**Suzanne Vega:** It's nice that the Talkhouse is healthy. One thing that's really bad is that a lot of the New York venues . . . even the great, classic ones like the Bottom Line, I never thought I'd see the end of that. So it's kind of cool that this is happening out here.

## **Forty-two: So Good To Me**

**George Bakke:** When I talk about the Talkhouse, I get choked up. That place has got such memories with me, it's unbelievable. My first time was back in the '80s, with just one show here and there with a friend. In the mid-90s, I started working for Toyota and started to go to a few more shows.

It wasn't until I became a manager and had a ton of money that I could afford to go to all the shows I wanted to. From 1998 to 2005, I was Peter's number-one or two person there, buying thousands of dollars' worth of tickets. I went quite a bit during the summers, but I would go year-round.

I used to take my whole staff from Sunrise Toyota, all the young girls and guys. I made it a night out—I would treat for dinner and take them to a show. They enjoyed it so much it became a several-times-a-year thing, taking eight to 16 people.

J. Geils and Magic Dick blew the place apart, they were unbelievable. The young ones, the older ones, and the ones my age all said, "Let us know when you're going to other shows! Let us know who's playing there."

One of my friends is friends with Vanilla Fudge, so when we went to see them, they took a ton of pictures of me and my girls, and their website was covered with them for the whole next year.

We were at the table. I had a young girl with me, she was sitting in front up at the stage, and Timmy, the bass player—my friend knows him—leaned over, grabbed her hand and had her slap his bass. He was telling her to slap it hard. This is *not* what people typically see when they go to a big concert.

I go to Jones Beach, Westbury Music Fair, I've been all over, and I have never enjoyed music better than at the Talkhouse. Derek Trucks, two inches from me with his guitar in my face. Sonny Landreth, Johnny Winter, Leon Russell, Dave Mason, John Hiatt, the Radiators, Southside Johnny—I've seen him a couple of times. I saw Ian Hunter—"All the Young Dudes"

has real meaning to me. That's one of those songs that gives me goosebumps. Such great memories.

I guess it's one of those times that life had been so good to me. I had a beautiful house on the water, I owned a wildlife refuge, and all the trips to the Talkhouse—everybody should have the time that I had.

### **Forty-three: Pack Up Your Sorrows**

**Judy Collins:** I've played a lot of places, from the Royal Albert Hall, the opera house in Sydney, to the Carlyle Hotel and the Stephen Talkhouse. All it takes is a great audience. They surely have that. It's probably like the Gaslight in the old days. Gerde's Folk City was similar. There was just a more free-floating, rough-around-the-edges feel, but it was a get-down place. It was a very, very enthusiastic audience, which is true at Talkhouse as well.

There's a charm about it that's very alluring. It's a place where people are gathering for a particular purpose, and I like that. When they come to see me, they come to see me, which is very important. They pay attention, they're very devoted fans, they're very enthusiastic. It's an interesting place because you can see out into the audience, you can see what everybody's up to. It's always fun to be out there. We love it.

### **Forty-four: Ask The Angels**

**Steve Day:** Patti Smith has a reputation for being standoffish, does not want to talk to anybody, will not let anyone photograph her.

I dated a woman who was a huge Patti Smith fan. She was in law school in Vermont. Patti Smith was playing, and I had the idea that I was going to take her picture, scan it, print it out, and have her write “Happy Birthday Pam, love Patti Smith.” I was downstairs mulling this over. Mike Winch, who owns the Mercury Lounge in New York, was here, and he was like, “I wouldn’t do that, she’s not going to let you.” I was thinking, “Goddamn it, I’ve got to think of something.” She was very standoffish all the time she played here, and I was kind of scared of her.

She had done the show and was upstairs, and I think it was Carter who said, “What’s she gonna do, fuckin’ stab you?”

So I went up there, I was like, “Hey, Ms. Smith, my girlfriend is a huge fan, but she couldn’t make it, she’s in law school in Vermont, and I was wondering if . . .” and she cut me off: “You got her phone number? Call her.”

I called her, Patti got on the phone with Pam, she was like, “Hey, Pam, it’s Patti Smith,” and sang “Happy Birthday” to her. After I was hearing all these stories about what an ogre she is, she’s not going to let you take her picture, she’s not going to sign anything, she called her up! It was this place.

Pam and I broke up that year, 2006. To this day, we call each other on our birthdays, just to say happy birthday, and she still brings it up. “I tell everybody about that, Patti Smith called me on my birthday and sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to me.”



## Forty-five: I Just Can't Stop It

**Andrea McCafferty:** One thing that I'm proud of: I really pushed the '80s music in this place. Howard Jones was mine, the Fix was mine. Modern English, all these bands, I was the one that instigated it.

Peter came up to me and was like, "Do you know Dave Wakeling?"

"Do I know Dave Wakeling? Oh my God, the English Beat! You have to get them!"

Dave Wakeling was huge. It was one of the best things. It was ska, it was little reggae tunes, it was Eighties. At the time I got him to get Modern English and Howard Jones, there were people here, but it tended to be our generation. Whereas now, the Eighties has come back, so the young generation is into it now.

**Dave Wakeling:** The Talkhouse has been wonderful for us. We've really enjoyed ourselves. What it lacks in size, it makes up in enthusiasm. We have the most wonderful concerts there—it's always a breath of fresh air after you've been doing the big-city houses. Also, I got my photograph with Randy Lerner, who owns my football team, Aston Villa, back in Birmingham.

I remember walking in and saying, "*Really?*" Then I got the hang of it, and it fits perfectly with the ambiance of the place. Everybody's enjoying that vibe, carefully casual. It's a perfect expression of the place.

[My first visit to the East End and our first Talkhouse gig] were at the same time. It's been a few years. They gently blur into one long visit, a walk on the beach and sand in your toes, everybody dressed in sailor stripes—carefully casual.

I seem to remember once we did two nights in a row—anything to get to bum around with sand in my toes. There's just something utterly charming about it. I suppose it's a fairly wealthy area, but people get to enjoy acting a down-home, beach bum vibe, which I find fascinating.

The staff are friendly with everybody, and they seem to know everybody. They know how everybody behaves at the beginning of the night, and the potential for later! There's a family spirit at the place, despite the fact that a lot of visitors come.

**Paul Cleary:** I had just come back from Ireland—I had been playing rugby “professionally” there. I came down to Indian Wells Tavern, which was McKendry's at the time. The Beat had just finished—it was a *fucking* great show. I was with Andrea, and Peter came down and said, “Come upstairs and meet Dave.”

I was like, “No, no, I don't want to bother the guy.”

He said, “No, come down and meet him. I know you like the band, come down and meet him.”

So I went down, went up the stairs, and he was sitting with his back to me. He turned around, and I was like, “Dave, mate, you're a fucking legend.”

He said, “Thanks man! Where are you from?”

I said, “I was born in England but I grew up in Ireland.”

He said, “Where in Ireland?”

I said in Galway. He said, “Ah, my mother’s from Roscommon!”

I said, “Really? What was your mother’s name?”

“Quinn.”

I said, “My mother’s name was Quinn!”

And he jumped up and said, “We’re fucking cousins, mate!” and gave me a big hug. Classic. Yeah, there’s been a few good nights in the place.

### **Forty-six: The Opposite Of Church, But The Same Thing**

*I’ve been haunted by Stephen Talkhouse. I do feel like something is here. There is definitely a spirit here.*

— Matt Dauch

**Max Honerkamp:** My family bought Stephen Talkhouse in ’87. I was born in ’89, and I’ve been here since. There are pictures of me when I was four years old. I think my dad, when he found out I was born, was having a drink here. He had to go to the hospital.

I went to school with Scott and Mike. Jesse’s dad has a house out here, our parents are friends. He’s worked with me since I was 15.

**Scott Slevinski:** I grew up out here. I just kind of hung out here with Max when I was younger. I liked it, so I asked him if I could get a job here. The first night, I had to clean out the Porta-Potty.

**Michael Buquicchio:** My name is Mike Buquicchio. It took Peter about four years to get that right. He thought it was “Puquicchio.” I grew up with Max and my friend Scott. The year we graduated high school, I was 17 and asked Peter if I could get a job here the following summer as a bouncer. He okayed it because he knew me through his son. I started working when I was 18 and was told I was the youngest door guy to ever work here.

**Jesse Liss:** I was 17 or 18 years old when I started here. I grew up in the city with my mother; my father is from out here. My mother was friends with Peter for a long time, and it worked out that I got a job. I was very lucky.

On my first night here, I was pretty stupid and naïve. At four a.m., after a crazy night of watching older people drink, I was completely traumatized. People were all wired up, it was the end of the night. Phil was trying to clear the bar, get people to go. Larry was sitting at the end of the bar with his friends, a group of between three and five people, and he started leading a chant: Hell no, we won’t go! Hell no, we won’t go!

This completely pissed off Phil, who said, “Larry, you got to shut up. Shut up, they gotta go.” Larry was going, “Hell no, we won’t go,” and it escalated into a fistfight. This was my first night. I was like, “What the hell is going on? What did I walk into?”

I came in the next day and they were hugging, so I was like, something is strange—and very special—about this place.

**Larry Wagner:** The time I got accused of hitting Phil with a flashlight? I deny it.

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**Eiji Shiga:** I was born in Honolulu, and lived in Japan for most of my elementary years. From middle school I lived out here, graduated from high school here. I was 18 when I started. This was my first summer job, and it's still my job.

I wore khakis and a white sweater, dressed all preppy, thinking it was a regular job interview. I showed up and the doors were locked. I was waiting for Peter to get here for my interview. It was kind of cold outside. Phil came waddling down—this was before he got his teeth fixed, so he just looked mean. It was really cold, and he had a cutoff shirt on that said REPEAT OFFENDER.

I was like, holy shit, who is this guy? I didn't say anything. He looked at me and said, "Who are you?"

"I'm Eiji, I'm here to interview with Peter."

"You're here to interview with Peter?" He looked at me like, you're a little kid, what are you doing here? He opened the door. As I was walking by him, still nervous, he looked at me and said, "Ha ha, nice sweater." Thanks, dude, thanks a lot.

The first day I was on the job, we had to get the kitchen all organized so we could make sandwiches. It used to be a hot kitchen, so there was all this electricity, gas lines and whatever.

Phil, the same way he is now, where he's stapling tinsel to wherever he wants, was like, "This wire is in the way, cut it out for me." He gave me a garden shear.

I said, "Is it dead?"

"Yeah, there's no power in it." I cut it, it sparked my whole hand, blew my hand up. I wasn't hurt, but I looked at him: Are you serious? This was my second job ever.

I asked, "Is there, like, disability if I had just gotten hurt?" He just laughed at me.

For the first two years here, everybody told me that the first rule was "Don't listen to each other." Peter would be like, "Don't listen to Phil. Don't listen to Larry." Instead of listening to your manager or someone who's above you, it was, "Work on your own and use your common sense. Don't listen to their common sense." It's all crazy uncles. As you get older, you turn into the crazy uncle.

I don't play music. I like music. And this place has taught me to like all genres as long as it's live. If it's good and live, it doesn't matter what type of music it is.

**Mike Mazzaraco:** The first time I came here I was 14. I wanted to come to the open jam, because this was the place to be. Unfortunately, it was on the cusp of the changing of the seasons, where the open jam went from Tuesday to Thursday night, and I happened to come the first day that they changed it. They said, "Come back next year," or whatever. For a 14-year-old kid living in Hampton Bays it's kind of hard to make it all the way out to Amagansett.

I guess I was about 18 when I made the second attempt to come to an open jam, and they'd changed it from Thursday to Tuesday! I wanted to get into this open jam so bad that I tried a third attempt. The third time was the charm. This time I was finally of age, I finally got on

the stage, and I met Nick Kraus. He said, “Hey, you’re pretty good, why don’t you take a couple of comp tickets to a show we have coming up?” I told him about my band, and he said, “If you want some dates, give me a shout, we’ll try to work you into the schedule.”

I guess you have to be careful what you wish for, because I ended up running the open jam for, like, four years. I’m a SUNY Purchase graduate. I went there for studio composition—which was more recording engineering, a completely different ballgame, but you still know how to hit the same buttons—and had some engineering skills. I offered my services if the Talkhouse ever wanted a hand recording shows. They said, “Do you do live sound?” I told them I can. They said, “Our sound engineer is about to go on tour with the Subdudes, and we’re looking for someone to help fill in some of the shifts. Let’s see what you can do.”

A couple months after that, I started working here, and have basically been here ever since. I didn’t even realize it until the second or third year that I was doing the open jam: How did I get stuck here? Oh yeah, I wanted to come here since I was a kid.

**Matt Dauch:** I was born in Southampton. I started here in ’94. Josh Lawrence got me the job—he was one of the barbacks. His father, Dennis Lawrence—the Duke—was one of the original bartenders. Josh had school or something, so I slid in. Of course, they tell you, “We only need you tonight. I’ll call you if I need you.” And then you’re working every night.

When I started, people were like, “Are you Larry’s brother?” People *still* walk in here and think I’m either Larry or one of his brothers.

When I first worked here, I was out of the mix, the quiet guy thinking, “What the fuck is going on here?” That was basically the first 12 years I was here, really. But I remember a lot of stories—or at one point I was young enough to remember. Some of my first memories are of Crazy Vega.

*What is it like growing up with Larry and Phil, and then working with them?*

**Max Honerkamp:** It's weird. I've gone through such a different appreciation. I was here when I was six and would watch Giants games with them. I was the little kid sitting around the guys talking about whatever, I didn't know what it meant. They were probably talking about sex and everything, all the stuff that had happened the night before—they might have still been *up* from the night before. Seeing them in that element, and seeing that as normal.

**Jesse Liss:** I live about a half-mile away and ride my bike here. Eiji used to get me so wasted that I would crash my bike on the way home.

**Scott Slevinski:** I stole Jesse's bike once, I was riding around in here at four in the morning with a bottle of Milagro.

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**Max Honerkamp:** I feel like I'm in a unique situation: I saw the place from a kid's eyes, when it first started, and growing through the years and finally to the point where now I've worked here at night, worked during the day, and seen what it's all about. Always curious and finding out little things, and just being exposed to this environment as a kid—it's a very weird environment, but it makes weird things seem normal, I guess.

When I was little, I started working here, helping set up during the day. When I was 12, I would come in in the afternoons during the summer, just making sure there was ice, the bars were set up, the tables and chairs and everything were neat. Once I got to age 18, when you're



allowed to serve alcohol, I started barbacking at night. Now I've been bartending and done more stuff in the office.

During adolescence, I wasn't that big a music fan, despite being here. It was cool to meet people and see people, but in terms of my own personal interest, I didn't get too involved. Then around freshman or sophomore year in high school, a friend gave me a whole bunch of stuff. The band that got me into it was Red Hot Chili Peppers, so that was especially cool when Chad Smith played here a couple of times. It's still cool today but that was one of the first star-struck moments I had here.

**Michael Buquicchio:** I work at the front door, so I don't get to see much of the band until the end of the night. Depending on the band that's playing, I'll go out of my way to take a break and check them out. One of my first summers here, Nancy Atlas was playing and Chad Smith did a few songs with them on drums—I grew up listening to the Red Hot Chili Peppers. I was probably 18 at the time, and I actually got to stand on the stage watching him play. It was pretty cool for an 18-year-old to watch one of his idols.

**Eiji Shiga:** Chad Smith frequently plays drums here with local bands. It sounds incredible. With every drumbeat you can hear why he is Chad Smith of Red Hot Chili Peppers. To see that, as a kid growing up in the Eighties, Nineties, to see him right there pounding the drums. . . .

**Chris Carney:** I wasn't a big music person when I started working there. I enjoyed it, but wasn't the type that would drive to the city to go to a concert or anything. Now I've become such a snob—when my friends say, “We're going to see this show here,” having worked at the Talkhouse for all those years, you've got to pay *me* to see that! You've seen such big names in

such a small, intimate venue. And not only have you seen them, you've had a chance to shoot a game of pool with them before or after, or have a beer with them, or just run them from their hotel to the door.

When you're there for more than a few years you get to know the same people, because a lot of the big names play more than once a year, and they come back year after year. So you'd see Eric Burdon two times a year, Toots & the Maytals, all these great, phenomenal shows. If I didn't know them when I started working there, I got to know them while doing it. It's amazing to be in that environment.

**Max Honerkamp:** In high school, I organized for kids to come here a bunch of times. So there wasn't drinking. I'd charge at the door, but I wanted to figure enough for them to have fun and still maybe get some money. I had to make sure enough people would come to pay the sound guy, the door guy, and the bartender, because the bartender wasn't going to make any money, just a shift pay. I wanted to give them some tips so they would end up making money. It was fun organizing that, and a little bit stressful. This place was packed with kids—they actually had some good bands that they put together in high school. From there, I've just gotten more involved in music. I like most of the types that play here, and have an appreciation for all types.

After high school, I kind of changed. Instead of wearing khakis or whatever, I started wearing jeans and different clothes—fashion, whatever. James started making fun of me, saying that I looked like John Mayer, that I was going for the “John Mayer look.” I didn't really know who John Mayer was at the time. But for two years, he kept calling me John Mayer. There would be times when I was just hanging out in the back and he would put John Mayer on and start pointing at me and yelling, “Look! It's John Mayer!” One time he offered me a hundred dollars

to sing a John Mayer song at karaoke. I was 18 or 19, and it was in front of a hundred strangers that were older. I couldn't do it.

One night, all my friends went to this other club on a Thursday night. My ex-girlfriend was there, and I didn't want to see her because we had a rough breakup. I didn't need to be there, I wouldn't have had a good time. So they all went, and I ended up staying here with James. We were drinking together. It was the first summer I was 21, so I got pretty drunk.

We were playing pool with some random customers—we were both drunk at this point. A ball came off the other table and came rolling to me, and I was like, "All right, I'll get it." I got it, gave it to the guy, and started to play pool. James said, "You know you just gave that ball to John Mayer?" I said, "You're fucking with me," but it actually was John Mayer. He was out that weekend—he stayed down the road.

In any other situation, I would have gone with my friends. But I had to give the ball back to John Mayer. I think James likes John Mayer, so he went up and scared him away, because he was drunk.

**Mike Mazzaraco:** The band Nelson was pretty big in their time. Their father was Ricky Nelson. That was a benefit show. It was a duet that they did—half of it was a slide show and movie clips of performances that their father did, like a tribute to Ricky Nelson, and they played a couple of their own songs as well, one acoustic guitar and one electric. It was very intimate, just to honor their dad.

That was another of those bands that, coming in, I really didn't know what to expect. But I've got to tell you, they were the nicest guys I've ever worked with. I don't even want to call it nice, it was *beyond* nice. They actually offered to help move the speakers on the stage and set

everything up. That's unheard of. We have bands that are very welcoming, friendly, that treat us with a lot of respect, but these guys were like, "Please, let me help you. We're part of your team, and we want to do anything to help for this."

**Max Honerkamp:** When Arrested Development played here, I thought they were the nicest people. They were so friendly. I was just some little kid they didn't know.

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**Rhett Miller:** There's something really intimate about the Talkhouse, and located, as it is, on the tip of the finger of America or whatever, it feels very remote and special, and kind of hidden away from the world. I have probably played here 10 times, with the band Old 97s and solo acoustic. I think I brought my backing band, the Serial Ladykillers, here as well. So I've played here in many different formations over the years.

**Marc Broussard:** You head out through this neighborhood, through all these little communities that are gorgeous and obviously very upscale, and then come to a spot like this, that has no pretense at all. You see the pictures on the wall here, the stage has obviously been graced by decades of incredible talent. It's one of the favorite tour stops for me.

**Eiji Shiga:** Because we're in the Hamptons, you have celebrities that come here. That just keeps adding to the draw: "We're having a great party, and you never know who could show up." The guy from Blues Traveler came when there was a blues band, and he just *killed* on harmonica. Everyone in the room was like, "*John Popper? Seriously?*"

**Michael Buquicchio:** I got to meet John Popper from Blues Traveler. He sat in and did a few songs. I loved Blues Traveler but I was actually more inclined to talk about the movie *Kingpin*. He had a cameo in that. It's one of my favorite movies, and I got to talk to him about where they filmed it and stuff. That was cool. He had a cowboy hat on, obviously, but he had the coolest pimp cane. He has a cool style, and seems like a really cool guy.

**Steve Day:** Chris Baron from the Spin Doctors played here. He already knew people from Booga Sugar, I guess, and got to know so many more people. He ended up playing an after-hours party. Five o'clock in the morning at a share house on Meeting House Lane! I grabbed a case of beer, we finished everything here, I went over, walked in, like, "That's Chris Baron from the Spin Doctors playing at five o'clock in the morning at a share house." Then you pinch yourself and say, "I'm glad I work where I work."

**Eiji Shiga:** *The Blues Brothers* was a big movie for me in my childhood, so when Dan Aykroyd was up there doing the whole *Blues Brothers* thing by himself, that was cool.

Jimmy Buffett said no to a shot of tequila, then I looked at him like, "Really?" He said, "Yeah, you're right," and did one.

**Scott Slevinski:** Seeing Billy Joel here when his daughter was playing—I love Billy Joel, he's probably one of my favorites. Phil was saying he came up to the bar and was like, "Let me get a glass of whiskey." Phil pulled out a scotch glass, and he said, "No, no, no, a *real* glass." A pint glass full of whiskey.

**Eiji Shiga:** In a 14-day period one year, we got to see, like, six or seven Grammy winners. That was amazing. Another summer we had every big-name reggae artist—Steel Pulse,

Toots & the Maytals, Eek-a-Mouse, Israel Vibration—in a two-week period, back to back to back. It was the most incredible reggae stint that we had, ever.

Jimmy Cliff, they all come out in matching outfits. He has four backup singers. That's meant for a stadium, and we get to do it here. To be this close to that kind of talent, you'd be in the moat at Jones Beach. You can't get this close.

**Matt Dauch:** I think of this place as Americana—C.J. Chenier and the Red Hot Louisiana Band, a lot of zydeco. And reggae is more an extension of roots music. Not poppy crap. Reggae nights on Sunday: Some of these bands, you're like, "These guys are so good," but the best thing about it is, the audience will totally respond to it, because they like reggae. I would feel that last summer, thinking, "That was awesome, we just made these people so stoked for five bucks." Five bucks to see some killer late-night reggae band!

**Ray Ledda:** I sat next to Keith Richards. Leon Russell was playing that night. Do you remember the *Saturday Night Live* routine where Jagger is imitating Keith Richards? He had him spot-on, he really did. All he would say to me was, "Can you get me another Jack and Coke?" Okay. I'd order him another Jack and Coke. Basically, all he said to me was "How you doing? Jack and Coke." He wasn't outrageous. He was with two women. I'm not sure who they were.

**Eiji Shiga:** Keith Richards drank, like, three quarters of a bottle of Jack sitting here. He drank, over and over, Jack Daniel's on the rocks. There was such a buzz about what he was drinking.

**G.E. Smith:** I've done some great shows there, some really satisfying shows. Since I've been here so long—I started coming to Amagansett in '79 and have had at least a summer place since '81—a lot of times I'll be playing and 50, 60 percent of the audience, I know their names, I

know where they live. They know where I live, we've been to each other's houses. We see each other in the hardware store, at the post office. That's nice, especially for someone like me who travels a lot—I'm leaving with Roger Waters on Saturday for a tour of Europe. I'm lucky I have that, but I also get to do the real little hometown thing.

**Marc Broussard:** Guys like me that have been on the road for a long time can fall right into a groove in this room. You don't have to worry too much, because you know that the only people that are going to be in the room are people that are here to see you. That's one of the toughest things about playing bigger rooms—losing that connection with the audience. But in small rooms like this, tickets go quickly, and only your biggest fans are gonna get into the room because they're always paying attention to when you're coming around. I think we'll always be able to come out here and have a good time.

**Drew Holshouser:** What's the job interview? It's not "What do you know how to do? Can you run a console?" It's "Can you stay up for four days and do a show?" Because there are times when that's what it is. As the sound guy, you could be here at eleven o'clock in the morning doing the load-in, and wouldn't leave here until five-thirty, six o'clock in the morning the next day, and then you had to be back at two for another load-in.

It was really intense. You never got a break. It took a certain mentality, a person who had the skill but also the endurance to be able to walk out the other side of the fuckin' wave. But on the other hand, we're like Seal Team Six: we're the guys who do that night after night after night, summer after summer after summer.

**Matt Dauch:** Watching *The Voice* and all those stupid shows, we know from the first note if the bands are any good. The national acts that Peter hires, they're all really good, and I think people step it up here. I also think, this area, everyone's affluent. "Is that a producer? Is

Roger Waters in the audience?” I’ve seen people play here—people I’ve seen in other places—and blow it up. I mean, Toots Hibbert is cool, I love him, but I wonder how crazy it would be if you see him in New York. It’s pretty crazy here!

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**Scott Slevinski:** The line will go past Indian Wells Tavern, almost down to the corner. The Tavern started charging a five-dollar cover because so many would go in there just to use the bathroom while they were waiting on line.

**Ron Rafferty:** I can remember working the door many times and people would say, “I know Stephen.”

“Really! No kidding? And you’re 207 years old?” And Peter had a nephew named Steven, and he used to work with me at the door. Whenever anybody would say that, I’d say, “Really? Can you point him out?” Steven would be sitting there cracking up.

**Tek Vakaloloma:** Everyone’s got an angle. You get some crazy people. “I’m Stephen’s son,” or Stephen’s grandson.

“Oh really? You’re really good-looking for your age, buddy!” Everyone’s got some sort of angle. One night, Peter was standing right next to us. There was a *huge* line, and these people come up: “We’re really good friends with Peter.”

“Oh, really?” And Peter just nudged me. “How do you know Peter?”



“We grew up together, we’re really good friends. He wouldn’t want us paying to come in.”

“Should I ask him?”

“Yeah, yeah!” I turned around. “This is your best friend, standing right here.”

**Ray Ledda:** The women are the worst. There was one incident, I think it was reported in *The East Hampton Star*. Who came to the door . . . Trump’s daughter. Ivanka? There were two girls, and they were beautiful. Both of them were gorgeous, dressed to the nines. And I had a line stretching all the way down to Indian Wells Tavern.

She came up to me: “Is there any way I can get in?”

I said, “Dear, if I let you in here, it will start a riot.” I didn’t let her in. She walked away and was polite about the whole thing. But it was later reported in the paper that I tried to overcharge her. It was reported that I created some sort of scene.

They use any type of excuse. Crying. But 90 percent of the people you get a hard time from are women.

**Rhett Miller:** Before I ever came here, there was a story that went around with my wife Erica’s group of friends. Before I knew them, Erica and our friend Caroline came here on a Saturday night. It was sold out. I guess they know Peter just from having come here over the years, but they weren’t going to let anybody in.

The girls were a little drunk, and Caroline, who’s very . . . audacious, said, “If I strip completely naked and walk from the front door to the back patio door, will you let us all in for free?”

They were like, “If you’ll do that, sure.” So she did. She got completely naked and walked through the whole club. Erica carried her clothes. Of course, as soon as it was over she was mortified and couldn’t believe what she had done. But apparently they still talk about it here.

**Dee Moore:** Woman stripping out of her dress to gain free access to the Talkhouse late night . . . Drew asleep at the console . . . Peter in every kind of drag . . . Larry jumping over the bar to inflict justice . . . Phil shushing louder than the actual disturbance. . . .

**Michael Buquicchio:** We coined the phrase “Bud Light Zombies.” You go to a bar that’s so crowded, it’s hard to get to the bar, so they don’t even bother looking at what we have, they just say, “Bud Light.” It’s like a zombie apocalypse. We always thought, what would happen if we boarded up everything here and didn’t let people in? We’re convinced they would find a way to break in and maybe eat our brains.

**Scott Slevinski:** The Bud Light Zombies come out of the woodwork. Last summer, I think we sold the most Bud Light we ever sold. I carried in, like, 12 cases one night. They’ll come up to the bar: “Twelve Bud Lights, 12 shots of tequila.” On Friday nights, we’ll stand here waiting for people to start showing up at nine, ten o’clock. Then all of a sudden, at 11 o’clock, all the people that have houses over here, that are pre-gaming, start walking down the street in droves, like zombies coming toward a bar.

**Max Honerkamp:** I think the best bar to work at—in terms of fun, the way it’s positioned—is the back bar. It’s the best moneymaker. You’ll have people come up and order 10 shots and 10 beers, and go off and do their thing. In the front, they grab a beer for themselves, and will stand here and look around, and eventually they move. Sometimes it gets too packed because of the music and it’s tough to move. There, it’s still packed, but they order a lot, and then they come back and order the same amount.

**Michael Buquicchio:** One night I caught a girl taking a piss in our liquor cabinet. I guess she was either really drunk or very impatient on the line for the bathroom. When I caught her, I kicked her out of the bar. It was just disgusting. About a half-hour later, I saw one of the bartenders hooking up with her on a pile of garbage outside. It's a good place to be single.

**Nick Kraus:** I remember walking back there once and there was this girl that tried to sneak in. She had tried to jump over the fence. I don't know what had gotten stuck, I don't know how this outfit worked, but she was literally upside down with her dress over her head. She was basically like an upside-down Christ, naked, and yelling at me to not look at her as I'm trying to remove her from being stuck upside down. That kind of behavior is always funny, because here you are, sneaking into the club, trying to rip us off or whatever, and all of a sudden it's "Don't look at me." I'm not the one that told you to climb over a chain-link fence in high heels and a skirt.

**Michael Buquicchio:** I've had some weird experiences with the girls here, maybe something kind of gross, and I'll say to Nick, "Man, I feel really gross about this," and he's like, "Oh, that's happened to me. Don't worry about it."

"Nick, I woke up with blood on my hands. Dude, has that ever happened to you?"

"It happened to me like two days ago, man. Don't worry about it."

"Oh, okay." I don't know if he's trying to make me feel better or if it actually happened.

**Jesse Liss:** There are a lot of disgraceful things that happen here. A lot of stories involving pool tables. . . .

**Max Honerkamp:** The thing I think is crazy about it is, I'll tell my friends from college, who were not exposed to a life like this. I tell a random story about a night, and they can't believe it happened. I'm like, "That's not really *that* crazy of a night." You've got people drinking, music, and people trying to hook up. That's what it's about. Because I was exposed to this, I didn't abuse what I had—overall, I was pretty good. Since then, I've definitely had my share of moments where I've been pretty . . . interesting behind the bar. It's a crazy environment. But I like to work hard, too. Anytime I do go over the top I feel bad about it.

No matter where you are, you're going to be right there; when you go to a big concert, you can get lost in the back, it's completely different. You pay for what you're going to feel—the premium price is for that.

**Eiji Shiga:** There's a high you get, too, when you get other people feeling good. That high is unexplainable. When it's cranking busy, there's an adrenaline in the room, you're on a rush. You get to drink, you get to party, have fun with people. You make their night. There's something so great about that. It's like the opposite of church, but the same thing. At the same time, the nights differ. There are nights when you do trivia questions and cater to the 15 people at the bar; sometimes you're so busy that *that's* the show. It's turning people on. Like that movie *Almost Famous*. We're Jason Lee: "You know what I do? I connect. I get people off. I look for the one guy who isn't getting off and I *make him get off*."

Some guy comes up, gets two beers, thinks nothing of you. You buy him the third beer, he gives you a smile and "Thanks, man!" His head starts bopping to the music, he goes to the dance floor, he dances—on the most forgiving dance floor in the world. You don't have to know what you're doing, you go out there and look good, you feel good, everyone is cool with

whatever you're doing, and they finish, they come back sweating, "Can I get a glass of water, can I get another beer?" They're so happy, and that's who we do it for. Not the guy who says, "*Eight dollars* for a beer?" Not realizing that, stick with me dude, I'll take care of you. You're not walking out not drunk, if that's what you're trying to do.

**Michael Buquicchio:** One thing that's interesting about working here is, you'll work here all summer and see a lot of the same faces. You might not even know these people by name, but you'll know them by face. A lot of people that live in the city and just come out weekends, or just for the summer. But I think it's happened to all of us. We'll go into Manhattan, we'll go out to a restaurant or to a club, and people that we don't know on a first-name basis, we'll hear screaming across a restaurant, "Talkhouse! Talkhouse!" On the street, people say "Talkhouse, right? Talkhouse?"

**Scott Slevinski:** Guys come up and tell us their favorite memory of being here. I ran into a guy at a bar in the city once. He was like, "This guy was getting thrown out, and he was holding on to the door jamb, screaming, 'No, please, no! I didn't mean it!' And one guy took his fingers and popped them off the door and he went flying. That was me and my brother!"

**Steve Day:** Toots Hibbert wore the Stephen Talkhouse Indian-and-star t-shirt at Reggae Sunsplash. It's the Woodstock of reggae—they had 100,000 people there—and I watched it on pay-per-view. And here comes Toots with a Talkhouse t-shirt on.

**Eiji Shiga:** Every airport I go to with my Talkhouse hat, someone taps my shoulder, "Are you from the Talkhouse?" Every Christmas party I go to locally, people look around and say, "You must have served everybody here." "Yeah: rum and Coke, Jack and Diet, we don't have

Crown, we have VO.” I’m sure it’s like that for everyone—I can’t imagine what it’s like for Phil and Larry, who have been here for so long.

**Max Honerkamp:** I’ll go in the city and anyone I talk to—when I’m flirting with a girl, they’ve been here. I was in the city talking to this girl I’d never seen before, and she said she’s normally the type that goes to a club, she has to have bottle service, it’s not that crowded, and it’s expensive to go to. But she came here one night and at first was like, “I don’t know why we’re here, this is not the place I want to be at all.” And she said it was the best night she’d had out here and we had to drag her out at four in the morning.

**Eiji Shiga:** I don’t think I’m exaggerating: millions of cocktails have come out of this place. And because we get to miss the whole “misery” part of drinking, where people are not celebrating, we only see the good side. Whereas, if you were working at a bar in the middle of the country that no one travels to, you’re seeing in-and-outs of A.A. How many marriages, babies, relationships are spawned from here? However they end, that’s their own accord, but it starts here for a love of live music, dancing, having a good time.

This is one place where the cool guy and the loser can hang out, because the music is the draw. Every night has something to do with this musical history. But also, late night, it turns into something completely different, a raucous party bar: live music, party bands, and the atmosphere of people on vacation. The stress of New York City really gets relieved here. You can tell that people let go.

**Dar Williams:** You can always tell if a place has some history, and Stephen Talkhouse has history. It’s also very funny to get that three-way crossroads, because it’s a bar, it’s a local music place with a lot of history, and there’s also a lot of wealth. . . . But, sometimes the people

who are the “deepest” will be from New York City and don’t get to unwind much, and they come out to a place like this and they really let it all out. And that’s what happens! Every time I’ve come here someone has said something funny or something funny has happened. I don’t know if it’s the booze or the ghosts or all the naked pictures in the bar or what, but it brings out this very loose thing in the audience.

**Eiji Shiga:** To do it every night, to throw a party and make people happy—it’s so addictive that you can’t quit.

### **Forty-seven: Step Into a World**

**Kevin Santacroce:** I’ve been coming here since I was a little kid. My dad was a fixture in this place, and he’d been bringing me since the club opened. Music is a big thing in my household.

I came in shortly after Mike Mazzaraco. Mike was probably fulltime right after Drew took off to go on the road with the Subdudes, so maybe it was the end of 2005. I was a professional D.J. before that. I had always played music, I was in bands. I knew how to wire all the stuff up—I did a lot of sound-system installations in clubs, things like that. I didn’t have a lot of experience in live sound, but I had great people to work with and I learned fast.

There are a lot of large acts that aren’t traveling with an engineer. The way the economy is, too, things have changed a bit. Bands are traveling a lot lighter these days. If they can go to a club and there’s a guy in-house that can do the job and do it right, they’re not going to fly in somebody to do it.

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**Scott Slevinski:** Seeing KRS-One was cool. When I was a senior in high school, he was playing the night before we graduated. Max invited us all down. After that show, I was like, “I want to work here.”

**Max Honerkamp:** All my friends were into hip-hop and rap, but at that point I had little appreciation of it—I knew of it but didn’t care.

But Kevin is a really talented D.J., and KRS-One was one of the best shows. He was completely freestyle, completely happy to be here. I had a bunch of my friends come and they all loved it. That was one of my favorite shows.

**Mike Mazzaraco:** I have a recording studio that I’ve been working in since I got out of college. At one point, I was working with a winning contestant for the Puff Daddy reality series *Making the Band*. I don’t know if you ever saw that *Dave Chappelle Show* episode when they made fun of—in particular—the artist I was working with, Dylan Dilinjah. He was kind of cocky, he was young, he was more of a dancehall artist. In this spoof, they would say, “Who’s the greatest dancehall artist of all time?” He would say “Dylan, Dylan, Dylan, Dylan, and Dylan,” trying to show how big his ego was. Ultimately it got him kicked off the show.

While I was working with Dylan Dilinjah, they had a couple of hip-hop artists that they were trying to promote and record in a studio. One day we had Kevin work with one of them, J-Lane. He was good at freestyling. I let the tape roll, and they went for almost an *hour*, with Kevin digging through his records and hitting this guy with complete improv instrumental music.



This kid was so inspired by the work that Kevin was doing. Think about it: When you're rolling tape and you're performing, five minutes is a long time when you don't know what's coming. To think of 45 minutes straight, with no rehearsals, just to have fun in the recording studio—it was an epic moment.

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The KRS-One concert was hard to advance, because KRS-One was on a boat and I couldn't correspond with him or, really, anyone in his entourage. The only person I could get was the booking agent, and they kept promising me, “The day of the show we'll get in touch with you. Everything will be fine, just get X, Y, and Z equipment in there and everything will be cool.”

The day of the show came, and I got the phone call. I was double-checking all of their requirements. I was making sure his D.J. was happy with the equipment we had. That's when they broke it to me: “We don't have a D.J., we're going to use your house D.J.”

The Stephen Talkhouse is a live music venue; it's not a nightclub. It's not like we have a house D.J. We have Larry with his iPod—at the time it was his CD carousel. It consists of Barry White when he wants people to leave, and Marshall Tucker Band when he's trying to keep people there.

Kevin has been D.J.'ing since he was 17, 18 years old, so for a decade on the Hamptons nightlife scene he was a full-time, professional D.J. and played every room out here. I said, “Kev, I think you might end up D.J.'ing for KRS-One tonight.”

He looked at me, speechless. “You’re kidding, right?” because we were always busting each other’s chops.

When they told me they were going to use the house D.J., I told them, “Well, we don’t really *have* a house D.J., but there *will* be a D.J. there,” knowing that Kevin was the person who would be doing it. If I didn’t know that Kevin totally could do it, I would never have offered that.

If it weren’t for that moment with J-Lane, I never would have known the potential Kevin had and what his capabilities were. It was a moment that made me feel confident when KRS-One was on the phone with me saying he’s going to use the house D.J. “Yo Kev, run home and change, bro, you’re going to be the star of the show.”

### **Forty-eight: The Harder They Come**

**Peter Honerkamp:** I was sitting in my office when a tall Jamaican walked in covered in blood. He asked for a Band-Aid. You didn't need a rocket scientist to know he needed more than a Band-Aid. He was a member of Jimmy Cliff's band and said he'd tripped and fell and cut himself on the sharp edge of the cabinet. I called Jim Lawler and asked him to drive him to the hospital.

**Nick Kraus:** They showed up, probably not on time, and I realized there was something going on. I was trying to figure out what it was. Jimmy Cliff was in the office, the band was upstairs, some people were on the bus. I guess he was refusing to go on because he didn’t have one of his backup singers—I think there were two, and one of them wasn’t there.

**Peter Honerkamp:** A few hours later Jimmy Cliff and his band hit the stage—without the bloody guy.

**Nick Kraus:** Fast forward to finally getting Jimmy Cliff to go on stage without a backup singer, not a problem. From a customer standpoint, everything was the same.

Slowly, we'd learned that on the way out, on the Montauk Highway or Long Island Expressway, the backup singer and the keyboard player got into a fight over the remote control, and the keyboard player stabbed the backup singer with a . . . I don't know if it was a plastic knife or a kitchen knife. It wasn't a "kill you" knife, although I guess any knife can kill you. He had to go to Southampton Hospital. The people at Southampton Hospital recognized it as a stab wound, so they contacted the police, and because it took place on the highway, I guess, it involved county or state people, who then brought in detectives.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Ten minutes into the set, several East Hampton detectives arrived. It turned out the guy had been stabbed by his best friend, another band member, after an argument over what channel to play on TV escalated into a fight.

**Nick Kraus:** All of a sudden these unmarked police, detective-type folks were parked in the middle of the highway! They wanted to question the keyboard player. Myself and Peter had to orchestrate buying enough time for the show to be over, like, "You can keep an eye on him from here, but can you just talk to him after?"

**Peter Honerkamp:** He didn't want to press charges, but one of the three stab wounds was near the heart. If he died, they were going to have to arrest the guy onstage for murder.

Sure enough, Jim Lawler and the stabbed guy rolled up a few minutes later. The guy walked on stage and started playing next to his friend who'd stabbed him.

**Nick Kraus:** It all ended up okay: nobody died, nobody went to jail. It's funny, everybody always says those reggae guys are so relaxed. That's not necessarily the case, and Jamaica is actually quite a violent place. This could have been the same thing—Joan Baez, I'm sure folk singers have stabbed . . . well, maybe not.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Jimmy finished the set. The band flew back to Jamaica the next day. It was the last time Jimmy played here.

**Nick Kraus:** Peter didn't remember this, which is odd because he has a great memory for the dates of the shows and things like that, but that *wasn't* the last time Jimmy Cliff played here. They came back a second time.

It happened to be April 1—that's why I thought it was a joke. The first thing that happened was the tour manager walked up to me and asked for directions to the hospital. "You've got to be kidding!" In truth, they were just going to pay their bill for the last time. But I was like, "What *now?*"

## **Forty-nine: Bill and Hillary Visit Margaritaville (2011)**

**The East Hampton Star:** *Here in East Hampton for the storm were President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who attended a show at the Stephen Talkhouse in Amagansett Monday night despite intermittent power outages.*

**Nick Kraus:** We finally got a generator a couple years back, and we've never really used it.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Carter Kemp worked the door when Ilo Ferreira played in 2011. We knew Jimmy Buffett was coming in to play before the show, as Jimmy is the reason Ilo has a career in the States.

Jimmy's road manager, Mike Ramos, called an hour before the show and told me Hillary and Bill Clinton were showing up to see Jimmy and we had to meet the Secret Service. When I told Carter, he asked, "Is this a joke?" Well, it wasn't.

It was the Monday after Hurricane Irene and we were powered by our generator. The place was blanketed with Secret Service.

**Nick Kraus:** We were sitting here with all these Secret Service. I had been interacting with them all that day about the best place for the Clintons to sit.

The first time the Clintons were supposed to come here, years earlier, they didn't because the Secret Service had deemed that it would be impossible to protect the president in such a setting, if he came around on a Saturday night to play the saxophone. This was right after he became president.

Now here we were with *former* President Clinton and Secretary Clinton, not the First Lady anymore. They were all sitting there and everything was going fine, we had the generator and thank god we had bought it a few years back, after the last time we'd had to deal with power outages.

**The East Hampton Star:** *Peter Honerkamp, an owner of the club, speculated yesterday that the Secret Service agents accompanying the Clintons were perhaps nonplused when fire alarms were activated as the grid came back on line, and again when, during the performance, the entire room went black when the main power shut off again, before the club's generator kicked in.*

**Nick Kraus:** When the generator went off when the power came back on, “Pop!” It sounded like an explosion—it was the sound coming through the soundboard of the power flipping on and off, and all the lights went off. Okay, what do they say, count to 10? The Secret Service looked like they were about to take me away, after they’d protected their people. But the power came back on and it was fine.

**Peter Honerkamp:** The real power came back on as Jimmy finished his first song. That caused a blackout as the generator shut down. Total darkness for five seconds. Then the real power went off so it took five seconds for the generator to come on. That caused the fire alarm to go off. Lovely.

Anyway, no more glitches after that. Jimmy played for an hour. The Clintons were gracious, even going back inside, after thanking Jimmy upstairs, to watch Ilo play.

### **Thirty-seven: Bad Medicine**

**Phil Vega:** Jon Bon Jovi is always coming in.

**Donovan Frankenreiter:** The first time I ever came here. I was here shooting photos with Bruce Weber, and he was like, “I’ve got tickets for you, go see this guy, it’s a surprise.” It was Bon Jovi, acoustic. Howard Stern was in the crowd, it was really fun. I was like, “Wow, this is a trip.” I just thought, “What a cool spot. I’d love to play here someday.” About five years later, I came back and was able to play.

**Joann Pauley:** I felt like we’d “made it” when Bon Jovi—he’s so cute, right?—played a charity event, it was acoustic. I called for tickets and they said, “You’ll be on the waiting list.” Then Peter called and left us a message, “Don’t worry, you’re on the list.” I thought, “Peter called us!” I felt really important. We knew who Peter was, and we’d said hello—he must have known we were buying tickets. Bon Jovi was really great.

**John Hynan:** That was excellent.

**Joann Pauley:** That was the first time I had seen him—he’s so cute! Bon Jovi was thrilling, but other times we’re there and he’s in the audience, or Jimmy Buffett is in the audience, or Paul McCartney. Some of the other celebrities we’ve seen in the audience: Keith Hernandez, Richard Gere, John McEnroe, Anjelica Huston, Lorne Michaels, Roger Waters, Christy Turlington, Alec Baldwin, and Christie Brinkley.

**Paul Cleary:** I wasn’t up on Eighties American music. I liked my ska and all that stuff in London and Ireland. It was a charity thing—a Soldier Ride benefit, I think—so Peter asked me to work. I said yeah, absolutely.

Bon Jovi was just so. . . . He was a class act, first of all, a great artist. He was so complimentary about what Chris Carney and Peter have done for the Wounded Warrior Project. I came in off the door for a half-hour. He was just awesome.

Subsequently, he sent out a signed guitar for my friend's benefit at the Talkhouse. It was in the middle of the hurricane, or just after that, where the whole of Jersey was devastated. They still managed to get that out. People are bloody good, you know, they're generous.

### **Thirty-eight: Bright Lights (2011)**

**Rhett Miller:** I remember a night here where I came to see Gary Clark Jr. I was seated in a row: it was me, and to my left, Jon Bon Jovi, and to his left, Roger Waters, and to *his* left, Paul McCartney. That's the kind of thing that happens only at the Talkhouse.

**Eiji Shiga:** Gary Clark Jr. is very down to earth and cool, but he rips. Incredible.

**Max Honerkamp:** I really liked when Gary Clark Jr. played, that was a really cool concert. He had a really cool vibe, and I thought he was going to blow up. He's actually gotten very big—he played with the Rolling Stones.

**Marcia Ball:** A friend was playing there not long ago with a young artist, Gary Clark Jr. Johnny Bradley, the bass player, said he was backstage and a guy grabbed him from behind and said, "Great playing!" He turned around and almost died—it was Paul McCartney. He said he levitated.

**Steve Day:** The Gary Clark Jr. show, when Paul McCartney, Jon Bon Jovi and Roger Waters were here—this is like the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame! My brother would freak the fuck out, he's a huge Roger Waters fan. I texted him: "Hey, I'm standing next to Roger Waters, he's sitting at a table with Paul McCartney and Jon Bon Jovi." It's par for the course here. You just get used to it.



I took a Sunday night off to go see Gary Clark Jr. at the Surf Lodge in Montauk, and it was incredible. But the Surf Lodge is *not* anti-Hamptons. There were 300 people there. I was blown away by this guy, and I turned around and there were only 20 or 30 people actually watching the show. The rest of them were talking to each other: “Wow, you look so beautiful.” “Not as beautiful as you, I love your dress!” The guys were doing business deals and talking about what car they were driving.

Gary came here the next week. I told Peter, “This show is incredible!” Peter said, “I wish that translated, because we’ve sold 18 tickets.” A couple days prior, there was an article about him in *Rolling Stone*, and in two days we went from 18 tickets to a sellout. The word got out amongst those star-fuckers that so-and-so was going to be here, that all these people love him. Sure enough, the place was mobbed, and the only people that were really *watching* watching him were the celebrities. This room was packed with people who were here to stare at the celebrities watching this guy.

He fell in love with this place. He and his band had played here just one time. I was joking with them, “You guys are heading places now. I guess this is the last time we’re gonna see you.”

Gary said, “You kidding me? We’re never gonna forget you, we’re coming back.” After one show. They got it. This place *is* about the music. It’s not about any kind of scene, it’s about the music.

## **Fifty-two: Carl’s Café (2004-2012)**

**Dan Tooker:** The master of masters, the joke master of all. He worked in the city, came out here many years ago. He worked over in Shelter Island, different bars. Then he ended up at O'Malley's. He worked at O'Malley's for 25 years. He had a following, construction guys would go to O'Malley's at 4 o'clock and see him.

As the years went on and O'Malley's went out of business, Peter gave him a job here. He said Carl could use the back bar from 4 to 7, not knowing if he could bring a crowd to the back bar. And he did, we followed him. We're thankful to Peter.

Peter got to know a whole bunch of different guys, and we started this three-ball game, which Don Sharkey started and we're still doing to this day in honor of the Greek. He was just a great guy. And I thank Peter for his last eight years. They were the best.

**Joann Pauley:** Peter let him start running the happy hour, and all the friends that Peter attained from that—it was another part of the family opening up, it seemed.

**Michael Buquicchio:** Carl was the funniest guy. He was a king of one-liners, so he always had everyone laughing. Peter was always trying to prank him. Carl had a great sense of humor, he would appreciate a good prank. He was like Rodney Dangerfield, he could do it like that. He was so funny.

For his birthday, Peter had a stripper come in pretending to be the health inspector. She had fake rats that she had supposedly found, and lice, or something. She said, "I'm going to have to write you a citation!" As she was doing this, she ripped all her clothes off and gave him a lap dance. It was hilarious.

**Thomas LaGrassa:** Carl “the Greek” was another example of how Peter can’t help himself when he gets something in his head. He literally made Carl’s last bunch of years wonderful.

**Joann Pauley:** I miss Carl. Carl was really sweet. He was different. He was wonderful. A joke or a one-liner, like Henny Youngman—it was amazing, he could go on and on.

**Dan Tooker:** He didn’t show up for work one day. Tammi and I went over to his house. His car was there. I broke in, and I found him dead in the bathroom. He’d had a major heart attack.

He was 77. He worked hard and played hard. He had a good life. Great guy.

### **Fifty-three: Hammer of The Goddess**

**Max Honerkamp:** Lez Zeppelin is cool. They’ve played here forever. The first year was cool, because you can’t see *Led Zeppelin*. It was cool to hear their songs. The new singer plays harmonica, so “When the Levee Breaks”—she kills it. The guitarist is the one that’s been in the band since the beginning. They’re a good show every time. They usually play the beginning of the summer and the end of the summer.

**Steph Paynes:** I am from Long Island. Not many people know that. I’m from Great Neck.

*When did you first come here?*

I've always lived here as a spirit. No . . . I think that really, I hadn't been here until the band started playing here, which I want to say was the end of 2005, or 2006. But it was pretty soon after we got our first booking agent. We came out here and it was love at first sight. It was a great match. Something about it was really organic and worked, and the band always had a lot of energy here and people loved it. So we've worked at the Talkhouse pretty much every summer since. We usually play twice a summer, the bookends. We open the summer, and we close the summer.

I had been out here a bit, but not a lot. You know, we grew a community here, made a lot of friends, and now I come out here all the time. We've met some really fantastic people. People who live here, and love music, come here. How do I put this? I don't know what it is, maybe when they're out here they come to see music more. They might not do as much ordinarily or whatever, but they really are into it, and many of the people we've met out here are somewhat sophisticated, and it's been really great. A lot of people have hired us for private events, and we've just had a lot of nice networking opportunities from people who really get enthusiastic.

And the *fun*—people just go nuts when we come here, and it's very intimate so they can really get into it. We get friendly with them in that way. We all mingle after the show, so we've made a lot of good friends. It's very special in that way.

There are bars that might resemble this, but I think that this place is unique in the sense that it's really a roadhouse, in the truest sense of the word. You can't get that many people in here, and everyone's in it. It's very intense interaction between the audience and the performer. *But*, this place has incredible acts coming through here—it's a national room. Usually you get a

place that holds this many people or is like this, and it's "a bar in the middle of a town." This is that, but it's much more.

What's really kind of cool about it is, the Talkhouse hasn't changed in the sense of feeling it had to get all prettied up, or slicked out. It maintains the integrity of what it was and is, despite the fact that you have some of the greatest, well-known performers. And you get people sitting in—Paul McCartney will come down, or Bon Jovi. Everyone loves that about this place.

*Do any specific memories of playing here stand out?*

*[Laughter. Long pause. Shannon Conley, vocalist, laughs]* What? Did somebody throw underwear onstage?

**Shannon Conley:** Last time I was here I met this guy. . . . I ended up smashing my tambourine and he wore it around his neck. And later, I met him in a really weird, random way. He was like, "Oh my God! You smashed the tambourine! I'm the one. . . ." We get big groups of people that just go apeshit. What was funny was that he was all buttoned up the next time I saw him. We didn't even recognize each other because he was in *his* world, not losing his stuff—turning into a 15-year-old, rocking out with us. It was that, "Hey, hi . . . I'm a grownup in real life." So it's like fantasy time, everybody just comes here and acts out. But it's kind of a blur, to be honest. It's like one big, long party at the Talkhouse.

**Christopher Walsh,** August 2013: *I'm a latecomer to this band but Lord, I'm a groupie now. Since the last time they played here, about two months ago, they did several dates in Europe, including a gig at the Garage in London, where they were seen and enthusiastically endorsed by one Jimmy Page [cheers]. I submit to you that this can mean only one thing, which is that THESE LADIES KICK ASS [louder cheers].*

*Ladies and gentlemen, the power, the mystery, the hammer of the Goddess—Lez Zeppelin!*

**Steph Paynes:** It wouldn't be the same without playing the Talkhouse. I don't think there's any place we've played as religiously, and on the same weekends, so it's a tradition for us at this point. Everyone knows the summer starts when Lez Zeppelin plays at the Talkhouse! We launch the dream, and then we wake them up at the end.

### **Fifty-four: Life Journey**

**Ken Rafferty:** Leon Russell was always good. We'd go there so long ago, when he first started singing there. We used to talk to Leon a lot, because during the day he'd go around town and visit all the stores.

**Christopher Walsh:** In July 2013, I was invited by friends to sit front and center for Leon Russell. I was excited to see this legendary musician, whom I'd only ever seen once before, and it wasn't in concert.

I was staring out the window of the Amagansett Library a year or two earlier—I'm not sure if I'd moved back here yet—and saw Leon come from around the corner of his tour bus, parked in the public lot behind the library. He was riding one of those Rascal scooters.

I knew he'd had some serious health scare a year or two earlier—I thought it was a stroke, but later read that he'd had surgery for a brain fluid leak and also been treated for heart failure and pneumonia.

It was cool to be sitting so close as he played, but it was a bit depressing, too, because he seemed to have lost a lot. In his prime, Leon was a bad-ass southern wild man singing and playing with total abandon, and producing a huge catalog of great, rocking, organic and funky sounds. If you haven't seen *The Concert for Bangla Desh*, you should.

So when I went back in July 2014, I wasn't expecting much more than the fifty dollars Mike Mazzaraco said I would make selling merchandise for him. When I got there, though, the tour manager told me that they weren't in fact planning to sell merchandise that night, so I couldn't even expect the fifty bucks anymore. But I was already there, and the place was nicely air-conditioned, and Larry was handing me a cold glass of Peroni, so I stuck around and watched the show from the back, around where the merch table would have been.

Well I'll be damned. I couldn't believe my ears. Leon was a different man entirely. It was though nothing had happened, time had stood still.

*"Well you're myyyyyyy, yes you're myyyyyyy, Delta Lady."* Lord have mercy, the man never sounded so good. I hope he comes back next summer.

**Peter Honerkamp:** Leon Russell said playing the Talkhouse was like playing in his living room—only his living room is bigger.

### **Fifty-five: King of the Party**

**Big Sam Williams:** [The first time I played here] it was in the middle of the winter, and when we got here they didn't have the heat on. I was like, "Man, it's cold up here!" That's all I

remember. We walked in for sound check, I was like, “What’s going *on*?!” But they turned it on later on. . . . No, wait. *Did* y’all turn it on later on?

But once the people got in and started dancing, it got so hot. Even without the heat on in the middle of the winter, there was a great vibe. They made it hot for us.

Back when I was with Dirty Dozen [Brass Band], Chris Robinson, Kate Hudson, and Goldie Hawn came out, everybody was here. After we played, we all just hung out. That’s my homeboy.

Every time I come here, including my Dirty Dozen days and Funky Nation days, I hit my head on the ceiling, every time. I want to jump off the stage and get down into the crowd, and every time I’m hitting my head going down, then I try to watch myself getting back up on the stage, and I jump up—because I’m always running around—and be so hyper that I hit my head again!

It’s a long drive. Normally, traffic is really congested and it’s hard to get out here, but once you get here, it’s paradise, especially this spot. You’ve got a great club, great music, great vibe. Everybody’s coming out having a good time, no one’s looking for drama, looking to get into fights. You’ve got to love it—people have a great appreciation for what you do here, so we really dig it.

We always have fun here. The crowd always shows a lot of love, and that’s why we keep coming back. We just want to keep it going. This club has been here for years, and it’s going to remain here. It ain’t going nowhere. It’s too great a venue.



## **Fifty-six: He Happens to Own a Nightclub**

**Matt Dauch:** Peter's been doing this for a long time, and it hasn't changed much at all. Peter is living a unique life. There aren't many people I've met like Peter.

**Tek Vakaloloma:** Peter is probably the best boss I've ever had. He really is a true friend. He takes care of us and he'll back us to the teeth whether we're right or wrong.

**Jesse Liss:** I've only had one person thrown out from the bar. There was a customer who maybe had a little too much to drink. He clapped in my face and said "Give me service," something like that.

I said, "Don't talk to me that way." It escalated and we were shouting at each other.

Peter was standing right there, he saw the whole thing. He said, "No one talks to my staff like that, you're gone." And he threw him out. It shows how much Peter trusts us, how much he respects us, and the amount of freedom that he gives us.

**Klyph Black:** He molded it, he turned it into a family—because it really is a family.

**Eiji Shiga:** The family atmosphere, the social club atmosphere, the rock 'n' roll atmosphere—it's all the way Peter runs the place. It's not corporate, he's not all about the dollar. He wants to make people happy. He knows that through a venue like this, you can do benefits for the town, give back, have a place for people to get together.

Peter has brought so much culture, American musical culture, to this end of Long Island. If Peter was a different way, it wouldn't come off right. Peter is . . . not crazy, but eccentric. The place shows.

**Jim Lawler:** Peter just did everything right. He paid people—there were old blues people that thought they'd have to go to the owner of the club's house to get paid. But Peter paid upfront. He just hit it right. He was good to the people, and the agents loved him. I saw acts that I never would have seen in my lifetime, *never*.

**Thomas LaGrassa:** As his friend, watching him in action, it's unbelievable. Wounded Warriors is his biggest, greatest. But that's just Peter. Take any group of guys and one says, "I think I'm going to ride my bike across country to raise awareness and money for the vets." Nine-and-a-half out of 10 people would say, "Great idea, good luck." It's bar talk. But Chris said it to Peter and the next thing you know, they were in Atlanta Stadium singing the national anthem. With Peter, bar talk goes to manifesting his vision. He can't help himself.

**Chris Carney:** Every time someone needs something, it's like the home base of the community. People come to Peter to have a benefit or try to do something. It's a special place.

It's amazing, because people don't realize what goes on there: from the late-night shenanigans that happen at any bar at 4 a.m. to, Peter will be on the phone talking to the Department of Defense! Only Peter. I don't know too many people that can make it all work the way he does. I always say he's the Ben Franklin of our time.

**Joann Pauley:** He does a lot of charity things that you don't even know about. He's a quiet man, I think, but in traveling with him to these Wounded Warrior events, you get to know him a little. I didn't know he was teaching children after school—he won an award. He's very quiet about it.

We really didn't know anybody out this far east. He makes you feel like it's your family, these are all your brothers and sisters.

**John Hynan:** Peter is so giving. Like Joann said, it's the family atmosphere of it all. If you're there a few times, they really embrace you, they really bring you in.

**Joann Pauley:** And Peter always tells you, "We love you guys." He doesn't say much, but he says things like that that really make you feel accepted.

**Michael Cain:** Peter has used it as a platform for many things, and I think that's tremendous. He's one of the funniest people I know. We don't see each other that much anymore, but when we do, I'm glad to see him. Once you've worked at the Talkhouse, you always feel a part of that family.

**Judy Collins:** Peter is lovely. Very devoted to what he's doing, which is always good.

**George Bakke:** I had a catamaran, a high-speed boat that goes over 100 miles per hour. When you see them on TV and they explode into pieces—I can tell you what that's like. I can tell you what it's like holding on to a steering wheel and that's all that's left.

When I got injured, they put chairs to the side for me at a hi-top, which they don't usually reserve. I hadn't seen Peter in almost a year, and when he came in he ran up and gave me a big hug and a kiss. I had to choke back tears. Peter is the most outstanding person.

**Reg Cornelia:** I've seen him do benefits for young kids. He's *always* doing things for a local family that needs a little hand up. They have an annual thing now for Kendall Madison—he was a great guy, a star athlete, a good student, and he got stabbed trying to break up a fight.

A lot of things like that take place here, as well as the usual debauchery and chaos that surrounds the bar.

**Charles Baty:** Peter was always going out of his way to try to expose us to Lorne Michaels, or other people, to help our career. We came out there so many times hoping we would be seen by somebody that would get us on *Saturday Night Live* or *Conan* or any of those kind of things. He never gave up, he believed in us, and we got to play some great shows there.

**Marcia Ball:** Peter and I hit it off, we got to be friends right away. Peter is a good-hearted, caring person, first of all. He happens to own a nightclub. You've got to be a giver in many ways to be successful in the nightclub business. You never know what any night is going to bring in terms of income or outgo. You take a chance. Most club owners do it for love and musicians, and he is certainly one of those.

What he also created there is a community center. It's the gathering place, it is the one place that everybody goes, and that's important in any community, especially one as far-flung as the end of Long Island. It's a unique type of club. It's in a relaxed, funky-in-the-nicest-way spot, in the middle of what could be *not* the funkiest part of the country! It gives everybody a chance to let their hair down and enjoy themselves. Peter has made it possible.

**G.E. Smith:** The thing I like about Talkhouse is, this I what I do: I play places. I've been a professional player since I was 11, and been on the road since the late Seventies, a lot. Whether it's in stadiums or joints, I'm always playing. Stephen Talkhouse is a great joint, a classic. Peter is a perfect club owner. He's always very friendly to me.

They don't clean the stage from year to year. I go on there this year, I see my guitar pick on the floor from last year. It's always been a great atmosphere. That's why the place endures. Peter is certainly a part of that.

**Steph Paynes:** He always comes up and it's a big kiss. I only see him for very small snippets at a time—he's like a lighting bolt. The most I've seen of Peter recently is him standing by the side of the stage, happy and smiling, and I hear he never does that. . . . I was really happy that he was drawn to it and watched it.

And when I've had lineup changes, Peter has always been totally, "I believe in the band, that band is great and if you say it's good. . . ." When promoters are like that and work with you, it's nice. It's a loyalty thing, something to really cherish these days.

**Steve Day:** There was a band he got here called Los Amigos Invicibles, a Venezuelan funk band. They're a big band—there's seven of them. They were incredible, I loved them. I own all their CDs and I listen to them all the time.

The next year, I saw they were playing here again and I was like, "That's super awesome." I told all my friends, "You've got to come and see this band, and they brought buses out from Brooklyn. The place had a big crowd. The first year, I guess the place broke even, and Peter gave me some comp tickets to give to friends and everything. It was really fun.

He got them back the next year, and the place was half full. The next year, they came again and probably sold only a thousand dollars' worth of tickets.

The next summer, I was looking at the schedule and said, "Peter, no Los Amigos, huh?"

He said, "I'm really sorry, but I just can't do it. I've lost \$5,000 over the last two years."

I said, "Yeah, I know. Two years ago, you lost three grand, why did you get them back last year?"

He said, “Because I know that they’re your favorite band that plays here.” He took a \$5,000 bath, and the only reason he did was “I know you love that band.” That tells you all you need to know about Peter. This isn’t a business for him, it’s a clubhouse. He wants to throw a party every night, and he wants everybody to have fun. We—his employees—would go to war for him, but there are bands that would do the same thing.

**Paul Cleary:** It was a fuckin’ *decision* to not work there anymore. You’ve made all these friends, everyone you were around a lot. You’d walk in and it was family. It sounds like a cliché, but it really was. That’s all down to Peter. He’s a grumpy old bollocks a lot of the time, but he was great. His whole philosophy about the bar—what it’s about, what it should represent, how he runs it—is just great. And it should never go away. It’s one of those institutions now.

**Dee Moore:** Chapter by chapter, the Talkhouse has and is changing shape. A constant is its promotion of local bands, of new talents. Another is that it offers the best live music about, and with Peter the Talkhouse has become a serious venue for charity works.

A great place, great people . . . some now gone . . . and the best music around.

**Jorma Kaukonen:** Peter is just a really great guy, a really, really good guy. He certainly qualifies as a mensch. He’s been a friend for a long time. The work that he’s done for the Wounded Warriors is peerless. He’s a community-spirited guy. We hope Peter keeps it going for another 25 years.

**Terrance Simien:** I got to know Peter the first night we played there. He never changed. He’s still a diehard music lover, a party man, he likes to have his fun, and he’s not ashamed about it, and nobody should be. I don’t mean “fun” in a bad way, just get the most out of life. What are we living for? Make the most out of life. If I had to pick one person that does that it

would have to be Peter Honerkamp. Every time I've seen him, all I've seen is a smiling face, and always, always a gracious welcome. "We're so glad you are here, I needed this." He always says that, good words that feel good, that warm your heart.

When we don't go there, we miss it. It is family, after all these years. It starts with the boss. Peter has this vision, he knew what he wanted.

Peter puts on a hell of a show, and we have a connection more than working together. I love him, he loves me. I'd do anything for him, and I know he'd do anything for me. I'm just glad I met Peter, and I hope he lives forever and keeps that damn thing going forever.

Anybody that comes to the Stephen Talkhouse, they'd better be ready to party, because that's what it's all about. And one more thing: bring two pairs of shoes, man. Bring two pairs of shoes, because they will party.

— Stanley Dural a k a Buckwheat Zydeco