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Follow Mike, Angela, and Ernie's
around-the-world adventures

HAPPY THOUGHTS FROM THE 30A GUY

Greetings from Amsterdam Beach, Netherlands, where the scents of salt water and stinkweed swirl heavy in the air. As you may recall from previous issues, Angela and I took our own “beach happy” advice and set out on an around-the-world adventure, this time taking our little Maltese, Ernie, with us. Yes, I’ve somehow become “that guy” – the one who likes to pretend that he’s Indiana Jones, but in reality, he’s just a glorified sherpa for a 6-pound puffball with a ponytail and a colorful bow du jour.

While we miss our little beach town back home in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, this global trip has been on our Beach Bucket List for all 29 years of our marriage. So... around the world we go! And I hope to show you some new and different beaches that we discover along the way.

This issue is all about art and creativity (and the beach, of course). As you might expect, there are some excellent stories about extraordinary musicians and painters, but this issue is also about *the art of living*.

I don’t have a musical bone in my body. In grade school and middle school, the only reason they didn’t throw me out of band class was because they legally couldn’t. I have zero rhythm.

They put me on the bongos, and told me to go for that subtle, groovy background vibe. Damn-near silent, if I could manage it. They rewarded my percussive invisibility with a big “bongo solo” every performance. And when it was finally my moment in the spotlight, I always, always, always – without fail – missed my cue by at least a half-beat. Our band director (poor Rodney Johnston) just had to grin and tell me that it was okay, and what a great job I had done, and how much I was really improving. I knew he was lying. Everyone knew.

I could never draw or paint either. I tried. I bought all the expensive supplies. The cool, plastic toolbox. All the brush sizes. All the colors of the rainbow and more. When I was 30 years old, I signed up for art classes at the local community center. I was the only one in the class under the age of 70. (I finally felt like I had some game in school.)

No, I wasn’t blessed with the gift of music or artistic prowess. But, I had a revelation at some point. I am blessed with a gift for the art of living. You are too. But like any skill, it takes a lot of hard work to refine. I might not be able to belt out a song, brush beautiful strokes or even beat a bongo, but at this moment – here in a tiny, dog-friendly Airbnb in Zandvoort, Netherlands – I feel like I’m painting a masterpiece: my life.

So even if you feel like you don’t have a creative bone in your body, I hope the stories in this issue inspire you to look at your life as one big, beautiful, blank canvas. You can paint whatever you want on it. And if you work really hard at it, you might just finally find your rhythm.

BEach HAPPY, my friends!

Mike Ragdale
Founder, The 30A Company



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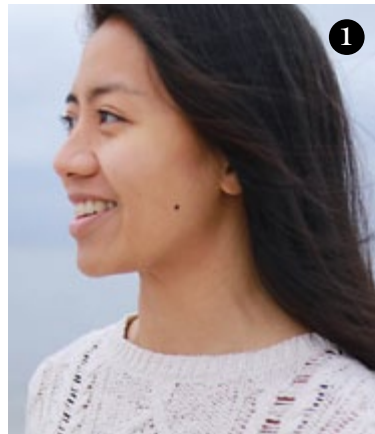
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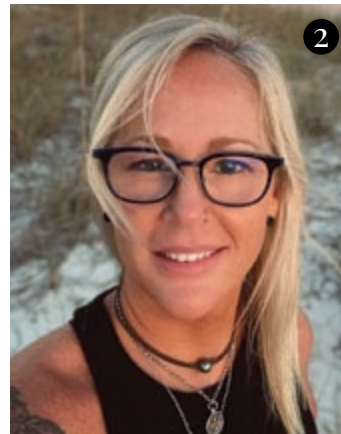
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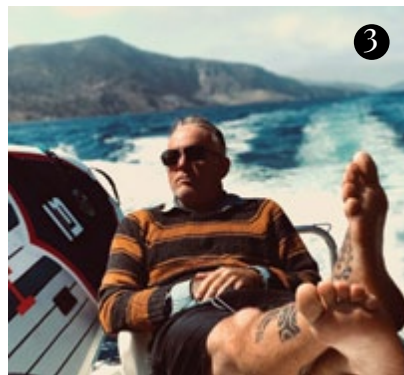
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1. ABIGAIL ABESAMIS DEMAREST

is a writer, editor, and former New Yorker based in sunny Panama City Beach, Florida. Her writing has been featured in HuffPost Food & Drink, Forbes.com, Insider, Business Insider, Apartment Therapy, and more. When she's not writing, she's reading up on the latest wellness trends, teaching Zumba classes, or reading a book on the beach.

2. SUSAN GUNN

is an Atlanta native and retired paramedic who made Florida her permanent home in 2014. She is a nationally published freelance writer and photographer specializing in night sky, storm, and lightning photography. In her spare time she can be found in the Gulf or exploring the natural world around her. You can follow her photography and writing on Instagram (@sgunnphotography) or visit her online gallery at susangunnphotography.com.



3



4

3. SEAN MURPHY

has returned to the panhandle after 30 years shooting celebrities and advertising on the west coast. He has built an inspiring studio in Fort Walton Beach, where he continues to work on national campaigns. When Sean isn't shooting, he can be found fishing from his BOTE Board or spending time with family.

4. MARTIN LIPTROT

is British but has lived along Scenic Highway 30A since 2004. After a global career in advertising, he made NorthWest Florida his home and runs a local PR and Marketing Agency (98RepublicPR.com). Martin's passions include soccer, cricket, rugby, Formula One and horse racing. He is a fan of craft beers and fine wines and enjoys good company and long, lazy lunches in any of the spectacular restaurants along 30A.



5

5. GEN HANDLEY

is a music writer living in Vancouver, BC, where he can be found running its wet streets or trying its many restaurants with his wife and son.

6. HELEN MITSIOS

is a poet and writer who lives in New York. Her most recent poetry collection is *The Grand Tour*.

7. WILL ESTELL

is a writer, editor, producer, and entrepreneur with over 600 published magazine articles and numerous online articles in an array of genres. Over the past 25 years, Will has been instrumental in founding twelve new magazine titles from concept to fruition, as well as serving as editor-in-chief for numerous others. Originally from the backwoods of rural Mississippi, Will is a father of three who splits his time between Destin and Navarre, along with his wife, ABC 3 news anchor, Laura Hussey. You can follow him on Facebook (@Will.Estell) or on Instagram (@IfWillUsedInsta).



6



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WILD RIDE

Best-Selling Novelist
Meredith Wild's
Journey to Global
Recognition

By Helen Mitsios
Photos: Sean Murphy



Long barefoot walks on the beach holding hands with a gorgeous partner, a gold-flecked pareo slipping down a tanned shoulder, reflecting the last rays of the sun. And by day, a sun umbrella poked in the sand, an iced tea in the cooler, and a good book before taking a plunge in gentle blue waters from which she emerges refreshed, like a modern goddess-mermaid. The stuff of romance novels? Ask Meredith Wild, one of the most successful erotic romance novelists of our time. Meredith, who started collecting lucky elephants and Indian Ganesha figurines as a girl (her parents owned an auction house in the Midwest), has certainly had those elephants come through for her. Lucky she is indeed – though luck is always just a small part of huge writerly success. She made publishing headlines when she signed a seven-million-dollar book deal for Hacker, her best-selling series, and we’re talking a #1 *New York Times* bestseller.

Now living in her “dream house” along Northwest Florida’s Gulf Coast, her days are much like the romance novels she pens. She’s a flip-flop wearer in a place she says feels like summer all year long. Her downtime, sounding not unlike the aforementioned romance novel, is indeed spent with her partner walking on the beach, watching sunsets, and taking care of six cats (two are strays). Lest it sound like all leisure, she’s also a mother of three and runs a successful publishing company. Not to mention she’s always at work – idea-catching for forthcoming novels to satisfy her legion of fans.

We met on video chat and had a long talk about books, travel, and life. Meredith, a former English major, looks much like a romantic heroine herself, with slightly tanned glowing skin, long blond hair, and sapphire blue eyes. Wearing a silver nose ring from college days that she recently found in her jewelry box, and a sleeveless blue top that matched her eyes, she was forthright and modest, intellectual and earthy, powering on as always though getting ready to plan a short winter vacation in the Bahamas before returning to rule her book empire.

I asked if she owns a corset, and indeed, she has one at the ready because you might find her (hint, hint) at an upcoming masquerade ball in Orlando. She’ll be garbed in a Marie Antoinette-type pannier dress and wearing a mask, as mysterious romantic characters have been known to do throughout the ages.



What’s always in your beach bag?

A book, a book sleeve (to protect it from the elements!), and a notebook in case I get any ideas during my downtime.

Are your books, such as the Hacker series, described as erotic fiction, romance fiction, or erotic romance fiction?

Certain series of mine, I categorize as erotic romance. The Red Ledger series is considered romantic suspense. Right now, I’d say I write in those two subgenres.

When writing do you have an audience in mind—or do you write for yourself? If an audience, who are they?

I definitely write for myself—the story has to be intriguing for me personally. And I write for my loyal readers who have shared their thoughts about my work over the years, so I feel it’s important to give them a story they will enjoy.



“

As a businesswoman, I enjoy exploring shifts in power dynamics and power play in most of the romance novels I write. I started writing my first novel with the goal of portraying an empowered and successful heroine.

”

Your favorite beach or beaches?

My favorite beaches are Henderson Beach State Park in Destin, Florida, and Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman.

Describe a perfect day at the beach.

I love a day at the beach when the water is calm and flat, and all you need to do is stick a big umbrella in the sand and pull out a good read. I could spend hours that way.

How do you keep erotic passages fresh and where do you go/what do you do when you need writing inspiration?

I haven't written much erotic lately, and *The Red Ledger* was very much “fade to black” through much of the romance of the main characters. In general, I just try to stay true to the characters and the context of the book.

Your favorite book of all time? Why?

I often go back to *The Passion* by Jeanette Winterson. I've been really drawn to her writing over the years, and that one has always bewitched me.

Your favorite erotic fiction book and why?

Torn by Carian Cole. It's a really emotional slow-burn story with a ton of intensity between the main characters.

Why does erotic fiction use the adjective “steamy” to describe erotic scenes instead of using “sexy”?

Maybe the word sex gets caught in spam/content filters? Not sure.

Do you have male fans who read your books and come to your literary events?

Yes, I have some male readers, and several who have read *The Red Ledger* as that has more suspense elements.

In your novels, are men turned on by women who are in positions of authority and/or formerly considered male roles, for example, a pilot or CEO, or do romance novels tend to

have submissive women succumbing to strong men—the stereotype?

As a businesswoman, I enjoy exploring shifts in power dynamics and power play in most of the romance novels I write. I started writing my first novel with the goal of portraying an empowered and successful heroine.

What attracts you to a man?

Intelligence, creativity, sensitivity.

Describe the perfect romantic dinner/evening.

I love getting dressed up and having a romantic dinner out, ideally, in a big city I've never been to.

How do you dress for a romantic fiction evening of your own?

You'll usually find me in some combination of black, which takes up most of my closet (not exactly beachy but a remnant from my many years living in New England). And I never leave home without a little Derek Lam 10 Crosby perfume—a gift from my partner.

Does using a pseudonym free you to write under a different character?

I write under a pseudonym mainly to protect my privacy.

If you didn't live in Florida, where would you live or consider a second home?

A flat in Paris or Prague, or a cozy beach town in Costa Rica.

What is something we wouldn't know about you?

I've only ever written contemporary romance, but historical is definitely my favorite subgenre, maybe because those were the first romances I read as a teenager or because of my enduring love for Jane Austen. 📖

To learn more about Meredith Wild, visit her website (meredithwild.com) or follow her on Facebook (@meredithwild) and Instagram (@meredithwild).



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Welcome Reception/Registration at
The Court in Seaside - Catered by
Black Bear Bread Co. Symposia to follow.
Keynote Address by Rick Cole.

SATURDAY 2/25/2023:
is a full day that begins with a tour of Seaside.
Symposia through lunch, Symposia after lunch,
and then a break. Evening includes the Seaside
Prize Awards Ceremony at The Seaside Chapel
and a Gala Dinner to follow at Bud & Ally's.

SUNDAY 2/26/2023:
Breakfast, Shuttle meet up to Alys and
Rosemary for the Walking Tours.



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M. Nolan Gray
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KING of Art



One Man's Mission to Make Life a Masterpiece

By Susan Gunn
Photos: Mike Fender

John Nash was quoted in the film *A Beautiful Mind* as having said, “I don’t believe in luck, but I do believe in assigning value to things.” I was reminded of this soon after meeting and befriending artist and entrepreneur Dave King. During the hours of our conversations, it became clear to me that though King has experienced what seems to be extraordinary luck in his life, it is more true to say that he used his values and courage to get where he is today. As we sat in the surreal space he owns and operates called SOWAL (pronounced SO-WALL) House, he shared with me how he came to be the Chief Visionary of this beautiful art house by the beach.

Some who know him might refer to his story as the typical “rags to riches” tale. Dave’s story is not typical, and every unusual element is true. Born to a young teenage mom, he was raised in rural Alabama on the outskirts of Birmingham in a small two-bedroom, one-bath house belonging to his great aunt Connie. He lived there with his loving mom, Bebe, and Connie’s young son. With a wistful look and gratitude in his voice, he said, “She raised all three of us.” By the time he reached high school, he knew he had developed a panache for art, drawing, and painting. In co-op style, the high school he attended allowed junior and senior students, if they chose, to end their school day by 11:00 am. Preferring the creative over the academic, Dave laughed and asked me, “Well, what do you think I chose?” After graduating, with no solid plan for college, he took time off from organized education, choosing instead to immerse himself in real-life learning by hanging out with his long-time friends. King remembered, “They’re musicians and ballet dancers, painters and photographers. The universe, for whatever reason, took this not-too-bright kid with no viable future and threw him into this creative class of people, artists, where everyone was going to college. And I was the one friend that wasn’t going to school.” As Christmas came, a handful of Dave’s friends did a truly extraordinary thing: they pitched in and bought him a semester of college. Dave said, “What an incredible thing, what an incredible group of friends. That changed my life.”

Thrust onto a new, unexpected path that would last many years, King said he changed majors several times, initially focusing on communications and broadcasting. One of Dave’s friends, having purchased a new desktop computer, gave Dave his old one. This being prior to the birth of the laptop, Dave was forced to rebuild the desktop to meet the demands of his classes. As one result, he ended up with a computer science degree. This was nearly a seven-year journey for King. He spent the first five years at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, bartending to pay the bills, and of course, painting. “After year five, I was barely a junior because I had painted my way through school. If I didn’t sell enough paintings, then I just didn’t go to school that semester, or I would only take one class.” Eventually, he graduated from a small technical college after transferring his credits.



Dave's core group of artist friends had long since spread across the country. After selling enough art to fund his tuition, he decided it was time for a change. With an ingrained creative arts talent, a bartending skill set, and his computer science degree, King decided to move to New York. By now his mom Bebe had been married to his step-dad Mark, whom he thinks of as a father, for many years. He broke the news to his family that he was leaving. "Every day I was here, I was failing at my ambitions. Once I had that realization, I had a yard sale, and all my remaining paintings sold out." In 2002, with a half-loaded U-Haul, \$12,000 in his pocket, and a worried mother in the rearview mirror, Dave told me, "I drove all the way to

Elizabeth, NJ, with Tom Petty's "Free Fallin'" on repeat. I was driving up screaming and singing as loud as I could. It was like I was a jailbird that just flew away."

Dave's resourcefulness reached new heights when he purchased a small fold-out couch, a battery-operated lamp, and a coffee table from the IKEA store in Elizabeth. The unoccupied space in his U-Haul served as his short-term residence, but it wasn't long before his ingenuity procured him a small apartment in Brooklyn. As I listened to Dave, it occurred to me that his move was just six months after 9/11. I asked if he had any fears about the timing, and suggested that his move was a courageous thing to do. As

he paused, I could see the sadness flash across his face, "I have this photograph in Liberty Park across the Hudson River with my book bag over my shoulder with the towers standing tall at my back. It was taken on September 4th, one week before 9/11. I was heartbroken but felt like I needed to be there more than ever. For me, it was about managing risk. One of the biggest risk lessons I've learned is if you're about to leap into something, just measure what happens. Measure with full fidelity what happens if you fail, and if what happens if you fail is still greater than not doing it at all, then it's your moral obligation to see it through."

King did just that. After a period of walking to a nearby office supply store to use the internet to apply for jobs, he found himself in front of his mentor, Tucker Goodrich. Goodrich hired him at the hedge fund company Mariner Investment Group and took him under his wing. King credits Goodrich for teaching him the ropes in the world of finance while also becoming his friend and recognizing the social man and artist he was. He shared with me that Goodrich gave him some life-changing advice. King said, "We had just received our annual bonuses, and this was by far, more money than I had ever seen. Tucker told me, 'I don't want you to invest any of that. I want you to spend it, and spend all of it. I want you to move to an apartment



in Manhattan, I want you to move out of Brooklyn. I want you to start doing things that people in Manhattan society do.' I knew he was right, it was an investment in myself. That wisdom changed my life."

Dave had been away from the art scene during the transition from Alabama to New York but longed to be immersed in the creative world. He met his friend Rob Cantave and soon the two were socializing when they could. It was during this time that King met Bo Yung Kwon, who would later become his wife. It's always good to save money when you can, and King said he wouldn't have met Bo unless he was doing just that. Dave and Rob planned to attend the annual Summer Stage Concert in Central Park and agreed to a plan for free drinks at the event. One week ahead of the concert, after the stage was constructed, the two men slipped into the park at night and buried a bottle of bourbon near the stage. The night of the event they arrived early to claim their spot, which they had walked off in paces to mark the bottle. It had been a week of rain and sunshine, so the area had quickly grown over. Questioning their position, they spread their blanket and sat down. This was Dave King's lucky night. He gently plunged a finger into the grass by his side, and he hit glass. It was free bourbon for the concert, and a little liquid courage to walk up and speak to the beautiful woman he had spotted across the park. The year was 2007. They married in 2009 and had their son Peter in 2010.

Dave and Bo decided after much contemplation to move out of New York to the smaller city of Atlanta, feeling it was more conducive to raising an infant. Bo, an established optometrist, continued her work with the lucrative company Sol Moscot, and Dave continued to work long hours at a cyber security company, which kept him traveling. The family of three managed to squeeze in vacations to Santa Rosa Beach in Northwest Florida. Peter thrived, and eventually, they decided they would make Santa Rosa Beach their permanent home. After six and a half years in Atlanta, they relocated to Rosemary Beach, a coastal community located on the well-known gulf Scenic Highway 30A. Together they started South Walton Eye Care, but it was soon apparent to Dave that Bo had a mini-talent. He said, "Turns out, she's an amazing entrepreneur herself." Bo took the reins to her practice, and King found himself facing a sort of early retirement. He went from working eighty hours a week in a highly relevant and stressful job, to paddle boarding and working out. For some, this is a dream life, but for others, it can be a shock to the system with tertiary effects. King shared with me the night he thought he was dying. After severe signs and symptoms mimicking a heart attack, and a pivotal ambulance ride,



he was diagnosed with a severe anxiety disorder. He said it was the paramedic, Frank, who explained to him that this is a common occurrence in high-functioning, highly driven business people facing a sudden career change or retirement. Dave carries no shame or embarrassment in his openness about his mental health condition. As a result of his candor with friends, family, and other serial entrepreneurs, he discovered he is not alone in his condition. He has a theory: "The key ingredient to success is repetitive failure. There's a direct correlation between the number of times you fail and your degree of success over a long trajectory. Failure can seem demoralizing or demeaning, so we fear it. It's like saying the race car driver who totals the most cars winds up being the fastest, but we never talk about the long-term injury to the driver." He continued, "We have to talk about it, acknowledge mental health and how common it is, and how damaging it can be. I try to check in regularly with friends as to how they are doing. Touching base with those I know in this context lets them know they are not alone, and then I don't feel alone." He credits Frank and his many years of experience with strongly suggesting he find something about which he is passionate, and make it his job. For King, that was art. But first, he wanted to be sure he was up to the task.

King's self-test was (with Bo's blessing) to ask their young son Peter what he wanted to be when he grew up. "Whatever his answer was, that was what I would commit to doing for one year. If it was EMT or firefighter, I'm doing it, I didn't care. Astronaut, well, that would be a challenge physically, but I was going to try it." Peter's answer was, "YouTuber." I want to be a YouTuber." With a \$1,000 budget, he set a goal to reach one thousand subscribers within a year. He surpassed that and reached monetization in 13 months, setting a great example for his son. He was ready.

In January 2022, Dave, along with his long-time friend Rob Cantave as CMO, and additional partner Blake Jones as CFO, opened SOWAL House, a fitting name - SOWAL is an acronym for South Walton (the county where

Rosemary Beach is located). As an evergreen visual artist King recognized the Scenic County Highway 30A area as an art hub and a place where creatives were abundant. He dreamed of a place where he could not only give artists and creatives a space to utilize and express themselves but a space in which they could come together in a non-pressurized way to meet and share thoughts and ideas. The space itself is nothing short of spectacular. Seated in the heart of the Rosemary Beach neighborhood, SOWAL House is in itself a work of art, a vision from Dave's mind. The space is dressed in rich jewel-tone colors, custom interactive lighting, and multiple lush seating areas. Various works of art adorn the walls, and a wet bar waits over a custom blue glass tile floor to serve various beverages to clientele and guests. Included is a full recording studio where King invites guests from all walks to create fascinating podcasts. But the showcase is the area of the room where various performers and artists can serve up their talents in a mathematically designed spot affording near-perfect sound and lighting conditions. Combined, it gives visitors a unique and intimate experience they will not soon forget. Since its opening, SOWAL House has hosted celebrity singer/songwriters, poets, and authors, and it even held an exclusive multi-artist gallery showing as a collective in the same event. King wanted to include as many people as he could and offers annual memberships as well as event rentals up to four times monthly. It is from these proceeds that he can open his doors to creatives from the area and others who place value on the arts, inviting them by way of a SOWAL House "Key Card" which is shared with people of all backgrounds. King

told me he wants the small gatherings to be made up of people from all walks of life, not so exclusive. "On any given night, we might have long-time successful business people, and millionaires, meeting and sharing stories and experiences with students, baristas, and civil servants. SOWAL House is a place where everyone is equal."

Dave's vision has come to pass, and SOWAL House has taken flight. His little art house by the beach is feeding and revitalizing the art community and art culture of the Northwest Florida Panhandle. I have had the pleasure of watching King in his element during the many events I have attended in his eclectic space. He sits back taking it all in with a kind, authentic, and joyful smile. He walked over to me, leaned in, and said, "Coming from a rural Alabama background of humble beginnings, it gives me a healthy outsider perspective I wouldn't have had I been born into a life of privilege. Sometimes I feel like I slipped in through the back door, and I'm not supposed to be here." He laughed and told me, "There's always a little piece of me that feels at any given moment, someone's going to tap me on the shoulder and ask me to leave." It's this humble writer's opinion that Dave King is finally home. 🏠

To learn more about SOWAL House, inquire about event space rentals or memberships, or inquire about King's own art pieces, visit his website (sowalhouse.com) or follow their updates on Instagram (@sowalhouse) and Facebook (@sowalhouse).



“
A creative life is an
amplified life.
It's a
bigger life,
a
happier life,
an
expanded life,
and a hell of a lot more
interesting life.

- Elizabeth Gilbert

”



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I first came to the Emerald Coast of Florida like millions of others — as a tourist. Road trips would include long stretches down Interstate 10, and anticipation would only build once exiting to make our way south down Highway 331. Going over the bay bridge would prompt me to roll down my window and take in the first hints of the coastal breeze. The dense pine forests along Highway 98 were the final grand landmarks hiding the emerald green colors of the gulf that could be seen beyond the homes and dunes off iconic State Road 30A.

Like countless others, I was drawn to the area because of the prospect of life on the beach. The soft white sands. The sunny weather. But my ambition for just the beach blinded me to other natural beauty surrounding it. We moved to the area in December 2019, and before we could get plugged into the community, the world stopped to address an unprecedented pandemic. While we grappled with everyday life during this time, we learned to find solitude in simple pleasures. We explored our new community and uncovered natural treasures beyond the beautiful beaches.

Finding new hidden gems that we would frequently pass in a “pre-pandemic” world

became thrilling because we would never have slowed down before or paid attention. We found trails through state parks and neighborhoods. We discovered hidden boardwalks over captivating wetlands with large historic cypress trees towering overhead. With the historic drop in traffic to the area due to lockdowns and travel restrictions, my family watched wildlife erupt all around us.

The world seemed to serendipitously guide us down a path that led away from the beach, deeper into the surrounding forests, and finally to the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center located just north of the bay bridge in Freeport. The Biophilia Center seemed to be the culmination of our newfound adventures, and it helped give meaning to what my family had been discovering during this time.

One word that continued to echo throughout these adventures was “biodiversity.”



The Paper Bear

A BEAR’S EYE VIEW OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA

By Sean Couch
Photos: Arix Zalace, Chandler Williams, Thomas Smartt

Biodiversity is a term used to describe the variety of life on Earth, and it can also be used to describe all of the species in one region. The Florida Panhandle is one of North America’s five richest biodiverse hotspots.

There are more than 80 distinct ecosystems in Florida, and at least 57 can be found in the Panhandle alone. There are many endemic species of plants and animals in the panhandle, meaning they are found nowhere else on the planet. There are also entire ecosystems here that can’t be found anywhere else. Learning these facts changed our perception and gave us tremendous pride in the area we had decided to call home. Millions of people visit the area each year for its stunning beaches, and more are moving to become full-time residents, yet most are unaware of all the wilderness that makes this place truly unique.

During our inauguration of the area’s natural wonders, we met Arix Zalace, a long-time local, business owner, and filmmaker. For years he had planned to make a documentary that chronicled the area’s biodiversity, and I was starting a new charitable film studio searching for prospective projects. The timing of our new friendship felt predestined. We found kindred spirits in each other and decided to team up to create this film.

Arix’s initial idea was to create a documentary chronicling many of the area’s most unique, rare, and endangered species. After a full year of researching, location scouting, writing, and filming, we realized making a traditional documentary film was not enough. Development master plans were being drafted at an unprecedented rate to accommodate the latest real estate boom, making our area one of the fastest-growing places in the country. When you have such a substantial influx of new people moving into the area, it often can overpower the long-standing local community. There is knowledge and history that needs to be preserved when this happens, and too much content for just one film to encapsulate it all.

The Florida Panhandle used to have one of the oldest, most biodiverse, dense, and pristine forest ecosystems in the world before it was nearly lost forever at the turn of the twentieth century. Today, there are still more than 100 “species of special concern,” threatened and endangered species found in Walton and Santa Rosa counties alone. We live in an area that is an international treasure, and there is still much work left to be done.



Florida Black Bears are migratory animals that travel across ecosystems that need to be preserved. If we can bring awareness and protect these animals, we can preserve the ecosystems that they and countless others depend on for survival.



Scan to learn more and get updates directly from *The Paper Bear* team:



Audiences will see a whole new perspective of the Florida Panhandle and the remarkable beauty through beautifully hand-drawn animation canvases.

As we reviewed the early footage we captured and continued to work on the storyline, we realized we had something much bigger than a documentary. We had a feature film on our hands and countless other storylines we could continue to create that would benefit the community and stakeholders nationwide. Thousands of hours have been spent over the past two years wading through swamps, hiking through forests and bogs, living with wild black bears, and much more to capture the epic footage needed to tell this all-too-important story.

One of the most important aspects of this story is telling the history of this biological hotspot and how it was almost lost. If we don't understand where we came from and how we got here, it is harder to appreciate what we still have and why we need to protect it. Telling such a rich and storied past is a daunting task. We realized the best way to accomplish this was through classic hand-drawn animation that engages all audiences and provides a nostalgia effect. An animation team of more than a dozen has been working with us on this project for close to a year. Seeing the Florida Panhandle's natural

wonders represented in classically hand-drawn animation is truly breathtaking.

Live-action footage will be paired with the animation that will tell our history and share the unique perspective of the black bear. We began the long process of choosing the actors who would play the characters telling the story of this biological hotspot. With over a thousand men and a thousand boys auditioning nationwide for the two main leading roles, we narrowed it down to our final selections. We're more than excited to start capturing the final footage needed with them and their supporting actors in the spring of 2023, then move into the final post-production phase of this project. We intend to release the film in the fall or winter of 2023.

Producing world-class content requires significant creativity, skill, time, and capital resources. We are excited to have assembled a highly experienced cast and crew for the film, including talent from Hollywood, Atlanta, Chicago, Bulgaria, and Walton County. We are honored to have worked with over 100 professional biologists and scientists from some of the

most prestigious schools and institutions. Our advisors include a former Disney animator who worked on some of the most popular animated features of all time, including *The Lion King*, *Pocahontas*, and *Mulan*. And our other advisors have over 20 years of media experience working with big film studios such as Lionsgate, Sony Pictures, Paramount, and more. The E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center is our charitable partner and giving us access to film on their 55,000 acres of preservation land.

We have reached the point in our project where we're asking for the community's support to help us complete this feature film. We have organized a crowdfunding campaign through our website where you can support the cause along with great merchandise and perks only available to our supporters.

Our team can't wait to share more updates over the next year with everyone.

This is when you know you've made it.



30ATOURS.COM

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THE ABACOS, BAHAMAS

In The Bahamas, there's Nassau—the capital and the biggest city—and the Out Islands—a collection of pristine, secluded beaches where the island vibes are strong and life is a little more laid-back. The Abacos is part of these Out Islands, also called Family Islands, and unlike many destinations that are home to white-sand beaches and crystal clear water (the most stunning shades of green and blue), it still feels like a secret. In The Abacos, you'll walk along a picturesque dock and most likely be the only one there, and it's not uncommon to find secluded stretches that feel like your own private beach. British Loyalists fleeing the United States after the American Revolution were the first known settlers in The Abacos, and the New England style remains prevalent in the present day.

The effects of Hurricane Dorian, a powerful Category 5 hurricane that hit the Abaco Islands in 2019, can still be seen and felt as recovery efforts continue, but speak to any of the locals and you'll immediately feel their sense of pride and love for their home and everything it has to offer. Calm seas and various cays make The Abacos prime for island hopping and boating and sailing adventures, and you're never far away from a good meal and rum punch.

By Abigail Abesamis Demarest
Photos: Bahamas Ministry of Tourism,
Investments & Aviation



WHY GO?

Whether your ideal vacation is laying on the beach with a fruity cocktail in hand or snorkeling with turtles, you can do it all in The Abacos. The chain of islands and cays spans 120 miles, and the best way to experience it is to explore as many as you can. Each cay has its own unique personality and points of interest, from the iconic candy-striped Elbow Cay Lighthouse (featured on the Bahamian \$10 bill) to chill beach bars on Great Guana Cay where the rum punch is strong and white-sand beach (or pool) is just steps away. Island hopping between cays couldn't be easier, with ferries making regular trips between Marsh Harbour and Elbow, Guana, and Man-O-War Cays, and charter services that allow you to choose your own adventure for the day.

WHAT TO EAT / DRINK?

A trip to The Abacos isn't complete without eating conch in its many forms (conch salad, conch fritters, conch stew, cracked conch—the list goes on) and drinking rum punch. It seems that every restaurant, bar, and boat captain has their own carefully guarded recipe that contains some variation of coconut rum and fruit juice, and it always hits the spot. For conch salad, head to Kow's Conch Stand in Dundas Town, Marsh Harbour, and watch in awe as owner Jade "Kow" Adderley masterfully chops fresh conch, onion, green pepper, and tomato with impressive precision and speed. For rum punch, it doesn't get any more iconic than the Goombay Smash, which was invented by Emily Cooper, aka "Miss Emily." You can taste the original at Miss Emily's Blue Bee Bar in Green Turtle Cay, which is run by Cooper's granddaughter.

For fresh seafood and stellar sunset views, head to Colors Bahamian Restaurant in Marsh Harbour (go for the grilled lobster tail and plantains). If you're looking to spend the whole day at the beach, take a boat to Tahiti Beach, drop your anchor, and wade over to Thirsty Cuda, a floating bar and grill serving savory bites and sweet drinks (like a frozen Almond Joy Colada).





HOW DO I GET THERE?

Once you land at Marsh Harbour International Airport (MHH), you are spoiled for beach options on The Abacos island chain. Take a 10-minute cab ride to Abaco Beach Resort, check in, throw on a bathing suit and walk straight onto the beach if you need to get your toes in the sand, stat. If you prefer your beach time with a side of adventure, take a boat tour with Brendal's Dive Center and hand-feed stingrays on Manjack Cay. While the crew cooks up lunch, take a short walk down a path just next to Brendal's beach setup and you'll be rewarded with a pristine beach that's totally empty.

Other notable beaches that are a drive or boat ride away include Treasure Cay Beach (a renowned white-sand beach bordering the brilliant blue Sea of Abaco), Ocean Beach (a long strip of sandy beach that's a great snorkeling spot), and Sandy Point Beach (an ideal choice for seashell lovers).

Visiting The Abacos by boat is also an option—it is the boating capital of The Bahamas, after all.

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

The Abaco Beach Resort combines sleek, modern amenities with the natural beauty and warm hospitality that perfectly captures the Bahamas' Out Islands spirit. It's been around since 1955 and has long been a destination for travelers seeking an authentic Bahamian escape. Situated on 40 beachfront acres in Marsh Harbour and just a 10-minute drive from Leonard M. Thompson International Airport, it's the perfect home base for a trip to The Abacos. The resort underwent an extensive renovation and expansion after Hurricane Dorian, and all 200 slips in their marina were rebuilt. There are two dining concepts on-site: the upscale Bistro restaurant and the more relaxed Pool Bar and Terrace at Marinaville, plus two pools, free paddleboard and kayak rentals, and a sand volleyball court.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Beachfront balcony rooms at the Abaco Beach Resort start at \$385 per night. If you're planning on eating at their on-site restaurant, The Bistro, expect to pay a premium for polished plates and ocean views—about \$50 for main dishes. Popular beach bars like Pete's Pub & Gallery and Nipper's Beach Bar & Grill charge around \$20 for an entree, which doesn't seem that steep a price when paired with abundant sunshine, crystal clear water, and an ice-cold rum punch. Ferries from Marsh Harbour to Hope Town are \$20 for an adult round-trip ticket, and \$15 for children. Private charters are readily available, and pricing depends on your itinerary. Peak season is from March to July, and major holidays and celebrations include the Goombay Smash Festival in July and Junkanoo on Boxing Day and New Year's Day.



Listen UP!

2023's Best Beach-Friendly Headphones and Speakers

To us, there's nothing better than the warmth of the sun on our skin and the simple sound of the waves. We love being at the beach and taking it all in. But if you're looking to add your own personal soundtrack to your beach day, there are a variety of speakers and headphones on the market that deliver high-quality sound even in an outdoor setting. These are some of our favorites.

By Abigail Abesamis Demarest



BEST Battery Life

JBL CHARGE 5

The party never has to stop with the JBL CHARGE 5, which boasts an impressive 20 hours of battery life. It's also waterproof and dustproof, making it the ideal beachside companion. Sound-wise, the JBL CHARGE 5 has a bold sound and delivers rich, clear audio thanks to an optimized long-excursion driver, separate tweeter, and dual JBL bass radiators. It can even charge your devices so you can make sure there's enough battery on your phone to snap some sweet sunset photos. The JBL CHARGE 5 is available in a variety of colors inspired by the latest street fashion trends, so you can match your speaker to your personal style.

jbl.com
(\$149)

BEST Over Ear Headphones

AirPods Max

Apple's take on the over-ear headphone combines high-quality audio with a sleek design, ease of use, and all the bells and whistles that help justify the hefty price tag. AirPods Max boasts what Apple describes as an "uncompromising fit" that creates an optimal acoustic seal so you're fully immersed in whatever you're listening to. The headband is made of a breathable knit mesh, which distributes the weight of the headphones so they aren't pressing down on your head. A pillow-soft mesh material covers the ear cushions, which are made of memory foam. These headphones have beamforming microphones that isolate your voice on phone calls, so you can be heard clearly, even on a windy beach. Like other AirPods products, the AirPods Max has a simple one-tap setup.

apple.com
(\$549)



BEST Noise Canceling Headphones

Bose Noise Canceling Headphones 700

If your goal is to fully immerse yourself in your favorite tunes or to be able to hear your podcast or audiobook clearly over the sound of the waves, these wireless Bluetooth Bose headphones are the way to go. They're equipped with adjustable noise canceling, so you can control how much of the outside world you can hear. The Bose Noise Canceling Headphones 700 have a 20-hour battery life and plush leather ear cushions so you can enjoy your music, podcasts, or audiobooks all day long. If you order them straight from Bose, they offer free 2-day shipping, a 90-day risk-free trial, and price matching.

bose.com
(\$379)



BEST Boombox

TURTLEBOX Gen 2

Loud, portable, waterproof, and rugged, the Gen 2 TURTLEBOX offers crystal clear, distortion-free sound and has a convenient carrying handle. It even has a stainless tie-down so that it can be strapped down on a UTV or a boat. It's about the size of an old-school lunchbox and weighs 10 pounds, which is pretty lightweight considering the big sound it delivers. TURTLEBOX offers a discount if you buy two or more speakers, and you can pair their speakers together to enjoy a true left/right stereo sound. The company also offers free shipping and returns, plus a 60-day money-back guarantee. When you order your TURTLEBOX, you can choose the speaker color and handle color from a rainbow of options.

turtleboxaudio.com
(\$399)

BEST for Outdoors

Sony XB43 EXTRA BASS Portable Wireless Speaker

Playing music outdoors can be tricky, and when you add in sounds like waves, birds, and other beachgoers it doesn't make for the best music experience. But with the Sony XB43, your music plays loud and clear. Think deep, punchy bass and clear, natural vocals thanks to dual passive radiators and a two-way speaker system. It also has a Live Sound button that creates a three-dimensional sound experience, so it'll sound like you're at a music festival. Sand-proof and saltwater-proof, it's perfect for bringing to the beach.

sony.com
(\$278)



BEST Waterproof Speaker

Ultimate Ears BOOM 3

This portable Bluetooth speaker is waterproof and floats, so you don't need to worry if it accidentally gets knocked into a pool or if your kids decide to start squirting water guns at you in the middle of your beach nap. It's also marketed as being "virtually indestructible," so you don't have to think twice about throwing it into your beach bag with all of your other essentials. At the heart of all these extra features is a solid speaker with a clear, balanced sound and a deep base. The cylindrical design delivers sound evenly in every direction, and this speaker can be paired with other BOOM speakers to amp up the sound even more. You can even customize a BOOM 3 at the myBOOM Studio and choose your favorite combination of colors, fabric, and text.

ultimateears.com
(\$149)

BEST Wireless Earbuds

Beats Fit Pro

For early morning beach runs, beach yoga, and sunset strolls, Beats Fit Pro is the way to go. These wireless noise-canceling earbuds lock into place for a comfortable, yet secure, fit—no more fiddling with headphones mid-run or worrying about losing an earbud in the sand. Their universal wingtip design has been put to the test by athletes, so you know they'll stay in place. Compatible with both Apple and Android phones, the Beats Fit Pro have an active noise canceling setting that blocks outside noises for an immersive listening experience and a transparency setting so that you can hear the sound of the waves alongside your running playlist or yoga class.

beatsbydre.com
(\$199)





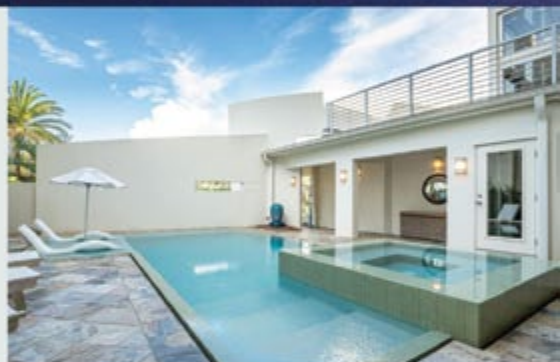
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\$10,725,000



59 CLIPPER STREET
INLET BEACH
5 Bed | 4.5 Bath | 3,370 SF | \$2,500,000



13 SEAWINDS COURT
SANTA ROSA BEACH
6 Bed | 5 Bath | 3,428 SF | \$3,199,000



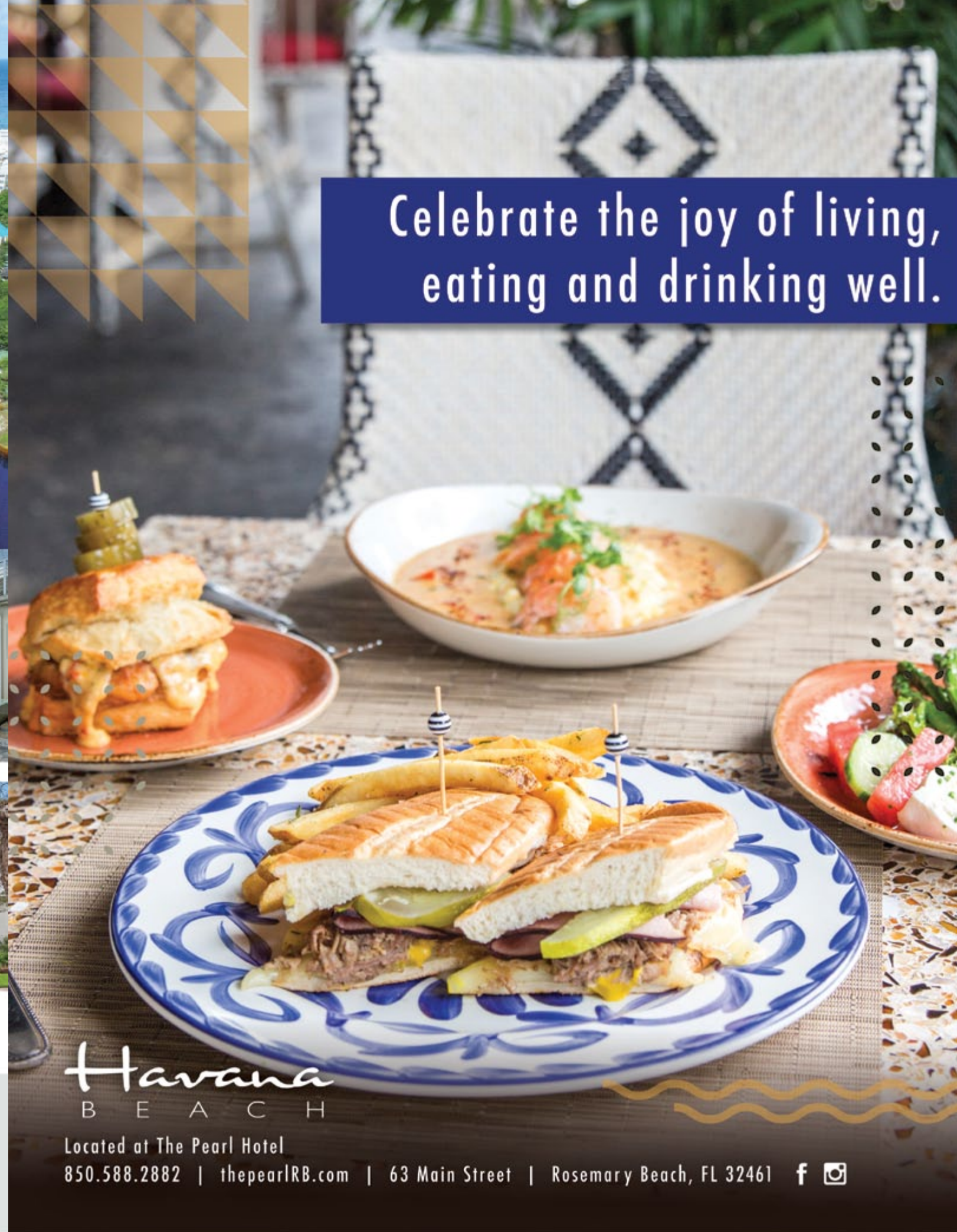
24 BENNETT
CHURCHILL OAKS
5 Bed | 5.5 Bath | 3,918 SF | \$3,999,900

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MARCHING to a NEW BEAT

Marine Veteran Finds Happiness Making Music

“Raise your hands in the air!”

The popular refrain at electronic dance festivals and gigs could also be the title of Scott Lassiter’s biography. Scott, a native of Fadetete, Alabama, is better known on Florida’s Gulf Coast and in the worldwide dance community as DJ 30A.

This year alone, Scott has DJ’d at concerts across the nation and headlined the Inferno Festival in Colorado Springs. Collaborating with his music-making partner Huda Hudia, his remix of Crystal Method’s anthem “House Broken” even made it to #1 on the charts.

But being behind the decks at some of the country’s biggest dance events wasn’t the original plan for young Lassiter.

“I grew up in Fadetete, Alabama – a rural town of 54 residents perched on the Flora-Bama border,” said Lassiter. “I don’t think I was particularly popular at school, but I found a creative outlet in music.” His first introduction to performing was as a rhythm guitarist with a band called Legacy, playing southern rock in bars and social clubs around Geneva County. “Because I was so young and way under the legal drinking age, my mom – who raised us on her own – had to chaperone me to the bars and clubs where we were playing.”

Speaking to Scott, you get the idea that not only was he interested in a possible career in music, but he wanted to make his mom proud too.

“My sister was up in Atlanta at the Art Institute, and my brother owned and managed Splash Bar on Thomas Drive in Panama City Beach, so I was the man of the house,” he said. “I wanted to do something that I could be proud of and there would be no question of who I was.”

So, fresh out of high school, Scott made his way to Dothan, Alabama, where he entered the recruiting office for the U.S. Marine Corps.

Enlisted, Scott served six years in the Marines, based at Camp LeJeune, as part of the 24th MEU – an expeditionary



quick reaction force, deployed and ready for immediate response to any crisis, whether it be a natural disaster or combat missions.

But after leaving military service in 2000, like so many veterans, Scott had to decide what would come next.

“I moved up to Atlanta where my sister was still based and started exploring the dance music scene,” said Lassiter. “It was here I met my music partner Dan – known as DJ Huda Hudia – and I started hosting and promoting DJ nights at Studio Central and elsewhere in Downtown Atlanta.”

While promoting and organizing these nights, Scott met and networked with some of the best DJs in the world, but he still had the urge to perform himself.

“I was aware I wasn’t experienced enough to headline an event myself, but I started to play the opening sets under the moniker GoldFinger,” said Lassiter, who chose the name because of his love for Bond films.

For three years, Scott expanded his skills and hosted bigger and better events, until a change in the laws made raves and electronic music festivals almost impossible to stage.

“We had to lay out a lot of money upfront to get the world’s top DJs, book venues, pay for equipment and security, and then, all of a sudden, the event would be shut down,” said Lassiter. It no longer made sense to stay rooted in the Atlanta area, so with his older brother in Panama City Beach, the Emerald Coast was an obvious choice. “We had been coming down here for vacation as kids – back before Rosemary Beach existed and when these dunes were the nudist beach.”

It was Laurence who introduced Scott to music - tunes he wasn’t hearing on the radio.

“The first album I bought was ELO’s *Out of the Blue*, and he introduced me to Depeche Mode, the English electronic band,” said Lassiter. “Laurence passed away last year, but he left me his extensive vinyl record collection.”

Then, as so often happens along Florida’s Scenic Highway 30A, an opportunity arose.

“I got a call from Oli Petit, the owner of the Red Bar in Grayton Beach, who needed a DJ for Friday night on short notice,” he recalled. “I packed up my kit and was there in a flash. I knew Oli likes his music funky, lots of James Brown, so that’s what I played, and the night was a success. I was on a high after that night and while others went out for a drink, I raced home and hooked up my computer and equipment and spent the night making music.”

This was the start of something new.

“Close friend and local artist Justin Lyons told me to ditch the name GoldFinger and christened me DJ30A – the name has stuck and has really helped my career,” he said.

By Martin Liptrot
Photos: Sean Couch



As well as playing DJ sets at big festivals, Scott has established a successful music-making business.

“The majority of my music is considered ‘Break Beats’ – inspired by those classic jazz, funk, and soul beats,” he said. “I’m signed to Kaleidoscope Music and have an extensive catalog of solo hits. My music is featured on compilation albums and is being licensed, downloaded, and played by music lovers in Europe, South America, and beyond.”

His music is also distributed via BeatPort which is a platform where DJs go to find new music. “It is kind of like digital crate digging in the way DJs used to look for rare vinyl back in the day,” said Lassiter. “It lets you know your tunes are being played in clubs and at events all over the world.”

Last month, Lassiter was the DJ for a major soft drink manufacturer’s annual conference in Sandestin, Florida, and he got to open for Earth Wind and Fire live on stage. These events are also learning and development opportunities too.

“Recently, I was asked to DJ a big wedding and the bride and family wanted some traditional Latin music included, so I had to hit the reset button and explore some of the great music coming out of that community,” he said. “Each of the DJ sets I do is tailored to the audience and the event – a wedding, a corporate meeting, a festival, or a nightclub – each is individual and different.”

DJ30A continues to make and play music across the nation.

In November, he played the Electronic Daisy Carnival in Orlando, one of the biggest dance music events. “Last year it attracted 200,000 event-goers, which is unbelievable!”

So, is the boy from Fadgette, Alabama, happy?

“You bet,” said Lassiter. “I get to work with artists I admire, attend the biggest festivals, and travel the world – all while making people sing and dance. What’s not to love!” 🎧

DJ 30A's FAVORITE ALBUMS

ELO:
Out of the Blue

James Brown:
Live at the Apollo

John Kelly:
Funky Desert Breaks Vol. 2

Public Enemy:
Fear of a Black Planet

Huda Hudia:
Electro Funk

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BLUE LEGACY



Photo: Lucie Drlikova

DIVING DEEP WITH EXPLORER AND CONSERVATIONIST CRISTINA ZENATO

By Susan Gunn



Photo: Kewin Lorenzen

According to science, Planet Earth is estimated to be roughly 4.5 billion years old. It is also the only planet known to provide the perfect blend of atmospheric gases, temperature, light, and water needed to sustain life. One would hope that all humans would strive to protect this big blue marble we call home. The planet has waxed and waned throughout the ages until the present day in its struggle to survive. Along the way, there have been pioneers, explorers, educators, and conservationists who have dedicated their lives to help keep our planet healthy. It is easy to say one person cannot make a difference in this effort, especially if removed from the collective, but it is not necessarily true. If you think all the great explorers and passionate conservationists have disappeared, you need to learn about an incredible and inspirational woman named Cristina Zenato.

Cristina's story began when she was born the only child to father Zenato Cesare and his wife Zanna in the northeast part of Italy near Verona. She spent most of her childhood and teenage years living in former Zaire, and then in the Mayombe Forest in the Congo. Her father, who passed away in 2019, was a military diver whose old dive images sparked Cristina's curiosity about the sea and what lay within. Her mother still lives in Lazise, Italy, on Garda Lake. Cristina recalls summer visits to her grandmother and great-aunt and says these three women were her pillars and examples of what women should be. She credits both her parents for her phenomenal work ethic but says she inherited her energy, temper, and tenacity from her dad. All these things have molded her into the tireless modern-day explorer, conservationist, and protector she has become. Cristina has an inherent respect for our planet and the animal kingdom.

"My love for animals comes from growing up in Africa where I was taught about sharing their space, being aware and respectful of their presence, and possible dangers, but not eliminating everything around us just to make something 'safe'. I grew up understanding that animals are essential to our survival. They are part of our world, and our presence makes it difficult for them to survive as they used to. I have a love for the underdog."

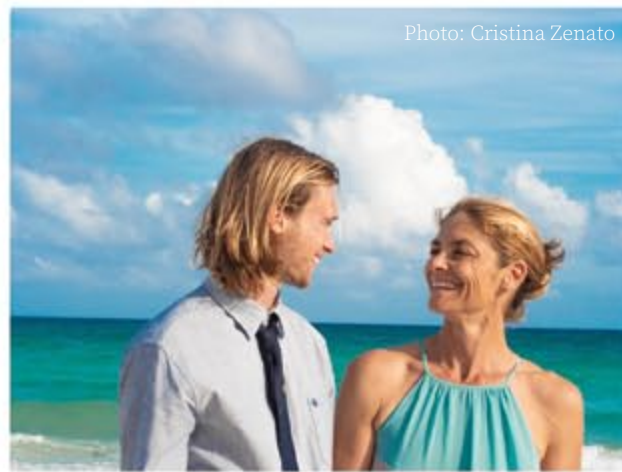


Photo: Kewin Lorenzen

Photo: Alex Rose



Photo: Cristina Zenato



Among her biggest passions are sharks. She met them in their element on her first open-water dive in 1994, and it has been a love affair ever since. Verona is known as the city of Romeo and Juliet, so it's no wonder she inherited such passion from her birthplace. Zenato has grown her love of sharks, our planet, and its animals into a life career with a work ethic that simply stuns. She has been a professional diver for nearly thirty years, and to date, she has logged over 20,000 dives. If her name sounds familiar, you may have seen her in countless newspapers and magazine articles, or during her involvement in one or more of her television appearances or documentaries through the years on various networks such as The Discovery Channel, National Geographic, BBC Science, BBC Travel, and many more. If you ask Zenato a question about sharks, chances are she'll have the right answer, and can respond in one of six languages she speaks fluently, including American Sign Language. After finishing her undergraduate degree and living in Southern France and Germany, at age twenty-two Cristina moved to Grand Bahama Island where she still works and resides today. It might be fair to say she spends more time in the water with her beloved sharks than she does on land.

"My interest in sharks comes from childhood. My love for sharks comes from the first time I saw them diving. My desire for and involvement in conservation would come a few years later, once I realized that most people didn't feel the same as I did about sharks."

For years she has donned her chainmail suits and dived to depths with students and people from all walks to share the magnificent underwater world where she spends most of her time. The sharks' plight is an abhorrent one. According to National Geographic and AmericanOceans.org, an estimated 100 million sharks are killed each year, either as a direct or indirect result of improper contact with humans. This is a staggering number, and one far greater than any capable recovery rate for these populations. Cristina has dedicated her life to educating the human population about the wrongful vilification of sharks.

"My dad always taught me there are no monsters in the sea, only the ones we make up in our heads. I have always had a healthy and educated relationship with the water and the creatures living in it. The most dangerous part of the ocean is the water itself, not the animals."

In 2009, she started campaigning to protect sharks with a 25,000-signature petition. By continuing her narrative about conservation, making a stand for sharks, and using her images and education, she realized her power to make a real difference. Cristina was the person to initiate the movement to protect sharks in the Bahamas, and this culminated in 2011 when the country declared its waters a protected shark sanctuary. She was also inducted into the Women Divers Hall of Fame the same year, which allows her to support mentorship programs for other female divers. To see Cristina interact with "her babies," as she lovingly refers to them, is to witness something extraordinary. Through the years, the sharks have come to know and understand her as friend, not foe. Circling gracefully in great numbers over her head, they each wait their turn until one, by one they gently glide to a resting spot as she kneels on the sand to receive them under her hands. It is there they accept her loving strokes, gentle embraces, and even her shark kisses. Her relationship with sharks goes beyond the well-known calming technique of rubbing the electroreceptors on their snouts called the Ampullae of Lorenzini. These animals have learned to trust Cristina so much that they not only allow her this intimate time, but they seek her out and position themselves so that she can use her own hands to remove a seemingly endless number of hooks and lines left in their mouths from encounters with fishermen. She wants people to know these creatures are not the monsters they have been made out to be, and that each shark is an intelligent individual with a unique personality. It is important to her that people understand she has many years of education and experience that enable her to know how to safely interact with them as a shark expert, and she does not encourage interacting with sharks without the presence of a properly trained professional for educational and conservation purposes.

Zenato has met a few other loves along her journey. In her years of shark diving, she has befriended other sea life. Two goliath groupers, one she called Peanut, and another known as Secret Agent, became like loyal dogs awaiting her arrival each day. But it was another diver, Kewin (pronounced



Photo: Lucie Drlikova



Photo: Kewin Lorenzen



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Photo: Kewin Lorenzen

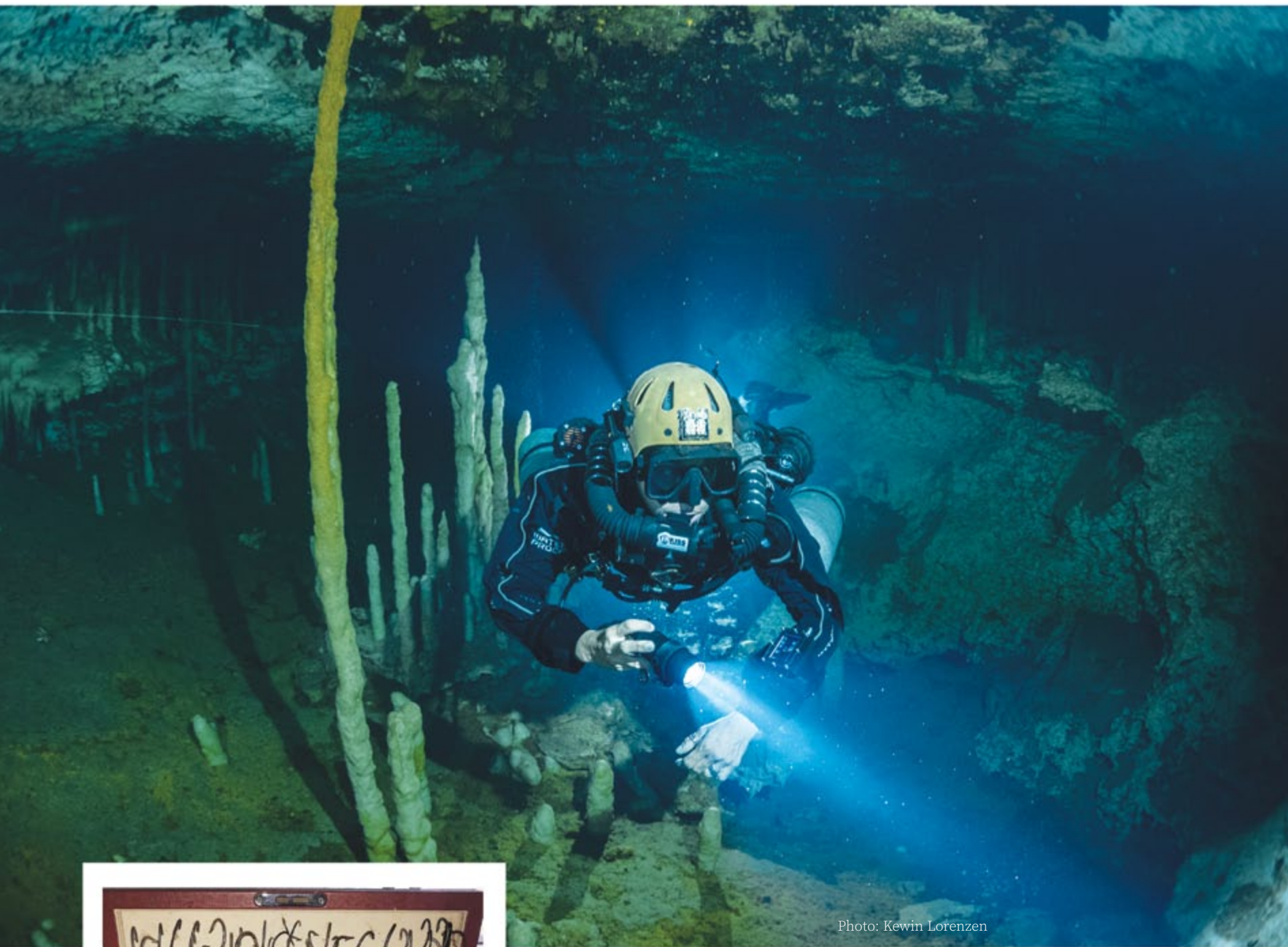


Photo: Kewin Lorenzen



Photo: Cristina Zenato

Kevin) Lorenzen, who stole her heart. They met in early 2018 and married in February 2020. Together they endured Hurricane Dorian and the COVID pandemic.

“Our first official date was January 31st, it was a full, blue, super moon night and we have been together ever since. We cave dive together, we shark dive together, we are a very balanced team.”

Zenato’s path to cave diving came early in her career and has been bittersweet. On just her eleventh logged dive she was guided into a cavern by a man named Ben Rose, who would become a mentor, an inspiration, and a friend. It was this dive that sparked her interest in underwater cave exploration, and she began the technically advanced training to prepare herself for these extreme underwater journeys. Sadly, she lost her friend Ben when he, his wife, and their four rescue dogs were lost in a tragic house fire. Cristina carried on and continued the grueling work involved in becoming an elite cave diving instructor. In addition to her PADI course director certificate, which enables her to train instructors in up to twenty different specialties, she also holds an advanced cave diving instructor certification from the National Speleological Society Cave Diving Section. These are just two of the many highest-level certifications she has earned in her field, which also include search and recovery, emergency first responder, and hyperbaric specialist.

“Cave diving is a big part of my passion, work, and dedication to conservation. From learning to cave dive to understanding their role in the survival of entire eco-systems, to promoting their exploration, mapping, and conservation, the step was not too big.”

Within two years of becoming a cave diver, she became involved with the Bahamas National Trust and helped them gather information and data to propose marine protected areas or MPAs. Cave diving is not for the faint of heart, and while Zenato also does this for recreation, make no mistake, she is a courageous true modern-day explorer and pioneer. In 2015 and 2016 on Sweetings Cay, she continued her exploration of the underwater Zodiac Cave system. Her venture resulted in the joining of the caves Gemini to Aquarius, and the joining of caves Mermaid Pond in Hawksbill Creek to Chimney, the latter being a first of its kind as she swam from inland to the open ocean through the cave. She also extended caves Pisces and Virgo. In 2020, after the usual arduous long-distance hike through dense tropical underbrush with heavy gear, Cristina and her husband Kewin discovered two completely new and uncharted caves they named Niflheim and Svartalfheim. These systems have now been mapped and continue to be explored by the couple.

In 2019, Cristina founded People of the Water, an organization she personally funded, dedicated to expanding the outreach of the exploration and conservation of both caves and shark-related issues. She directly cooperates with and supports the Museum of Antiquities, and is a member of The Explorers Club. She is an accomplished writer and naturalist, having achieved many awards for her work. When she’s not underwater, Cristina stays busy with online presentations and direct talks with schools and universities, dive clubs, women’s programs, and writing blogs and articles. She is surrounded by the love she gives in the form of her three rescue dogs. Mack, rescued off the beach in 2016, Blue, rescued in 2016; after Hurricane Matthew; and Tino, rescued off the beach after Cristina lost her beloved dog Mia in 2020 during the height of the COVID lockdown. She and Kewin have recently indulged their artistic sides, creating unique and beautiful underwater images to match Kewin’s musical compositions. In the rare downtime this phenom takes, she walks with Kewin and their pups along the beautiful beaches where they live, always carrying a bag for any trash they might find on the path back home.

“I am a firm believer in the power of one. I imagine my work being like a stone cast in the water, creating a ripple effect. My hope is to become a bigger and bigger stone. I believe change comes through knowledge and understanding, and I live by the quote, ‘In the end, we conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand what we are taught #39; (Baba Bioum, 1968). I see my role as a teacher so that we may understand more and fear less.”

To learn more about Cristina Zenato, visit her website (CristinaZenato.com) or follow her on social media (@CristinaZenato).



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A Celebration of Songwriting

Rickie Lee Jones Returns to 30A Songwriters Festival

By Gen Handley

The connotation of a singer-songwriter can vary from listener to listener, but ultimately, it is an artist who writes the songs they perform. The magic of songwriting occurs not only in the music itself and how it makes you feel, but it also happens when you watch the artist's songwriting evolve over time and experience deep empathy through their raw words and music.

One of those singer-songwriters easily includes Rickie Lee Jones, legendary jazz and pop artist, and one of the incredible headliners of the 14th Annual 30A Songwriters Festival, scheduled for January 14-16, 2023, in Walton County, Florida. Her esteemed company for this year's lineup also includes Lyle Lovett, Gin Blossoms, Steve Earle, Yola, and Morgan Wade. Ever since the days when her 1979 hit "Chuck E's in Love" was an ever-playing gem on radio air waves, Jones says that her songwriting has definitely evolved.

"The process has changed since my teens and twenties," she explained. "I am not as interested in being clever, though I do like to stay cohesive and tie ends together. Lyric writing is very specific. It is much more satisfying if I stick with a palette or lyrical theme...like if you start by talking about candy you don't end with 30-weight oil unless it's got sugar in it."

With over 14 diverse records, Jones exemplifies the evolving artist who relentlessly pursues their passion and craft. Even after her share of hit songs and albums, as well as two Grammys, Jones does not have a template for the songs she gifts the world.

"Each one is different," she said about how she approaches a new song. "It's not about my style of writing. It's about the song's way of telling itself. It could be a piano phrase or a banjo rhythm or an idea about something I saw that leads to a sea of feelings I didn't even know were on my mind."

Indie, alt-country artist Kathleen Edwards is also part of the solid 30A Songwriters Festival lineup for 2023. Like Jones, the Canadian singer-songwriter does not have a process or structure when writing popular songs like "Six O'Clock News" and "Back to Me."

"Sometimes the melody comes first, and sometimes the chords come first, or sometimes you have a groove or a story or feeling that you want to figure out how to encapsulate into a song," Edwards said. "There's no formula that works for me."

Edwards says that figuring out the conundrum of good

“

**At the foundation of it,
songwriters are storytellers.
That’s the primary goal,
to find a way to express
sentiment through
somebody’s story or
somebody’s experience.**

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songwriting can be as gratifying as the final product itself. “At the foundation of it, songwriters are storytellers,” she said. “That’s the primary goal—to find a way to express sentiment through somebody’s story or somebody’s experience. I find that really incredibly challenging. It’s like solving a puzzle, and it is. It feels like you’ve been given a problem to solve.”

She thought about it a little more.

“It’s challenging but incredibly rewarding,” she offered.

30A Songwriters Festival board member Russell Carter is particularly excited about this year’s lineup, and this is a festival that has hosted icons like Mavis Staples, John Prine, and Emmylou Harris over the years. One hundred percent of the festival’s proceeds go towards the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County which provides invaluable leadership, advocacy, funding, arts programs, and education. It is important to note that the festival features artists that are songwriting veterans and household names, as well as those who are beginning to make a name for themselves. Other notable musicians confirmed for the festival include Tom Rush, Shawn Mullins, Amy Grant, Brian Vander Ark (The Verve Pipe), Beth Nielsen Chapman, and John Craigie.

“This is a particularly strong year for emerging artists whose careers are surging forward, notably Morgan Wade, Lilly Hiatt, Abe Patridge, Yola, and the Black Opry Revue – a powerful collective of Black artists in the Americana, country, and folk genres – all of whom will play multiple sets throughout the weekend,” said Russell.

“Lyle Lovett and Rickie Lee Jones perform back to back Saturday afternoon on the headline stage, and there’s a rumor they might just pair up for a duet on a song or two,”

he added teasingly.

It is fitting that, for 13 years, a celebration of those who bring some grace to our lives is being held in an area that holds its own natural beauty. It is a preeminent festival that attracts the best of the best, such as Jones, who is returning a second time; she first played the festival in 2021. Jones’s 50 +-year journey as an artist is as interesting as the impetuses that set her off down this exciting path.

Jones’s trumpet-playing, singer-songwriter father Richard, who she was named after, was a pivotal person in her creative and artistic development. But the more she explored and listened, Jones would find songwriting inspiration in other voices that resonated with her along the way.

“My father was a singer and he looms large in my singing, but songwriting... it was a process, and it starts with the Beatles,” she recalled. “Then, many voices: Neil Young, Taj Mahal, Van Morrison, and definitely Laura Nyro. She had a huge impact on what I saw around me. Characters, situations, and my own humanity. Randy Newman too.”

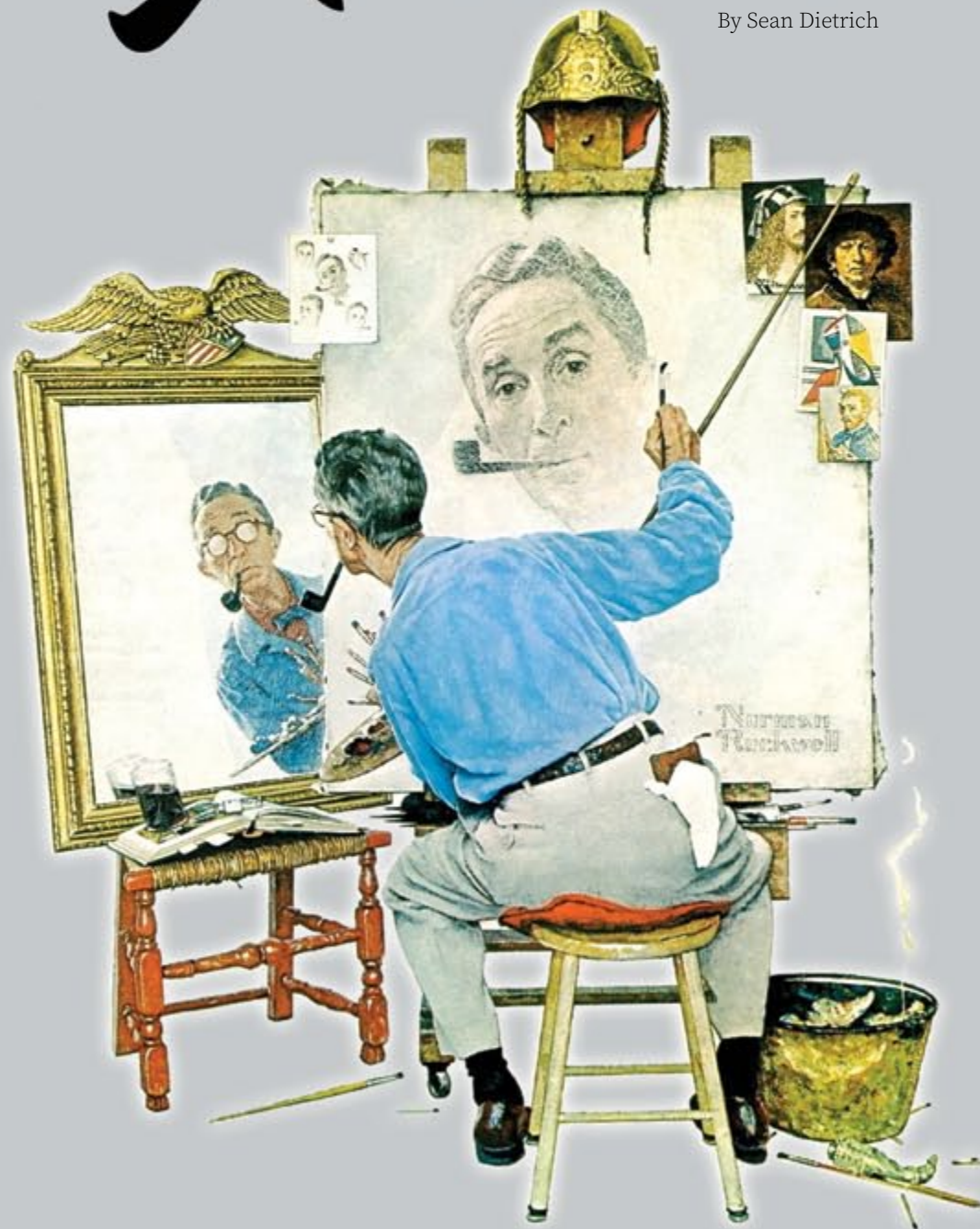
A beautiful tribute to songwriting, the annual festival has more than 175 artists playing in more than 30 venues along the 30A resort corridor in Northwest Florida, an area that Edwards feels is really special.

“This festival is shining a light on a part of the United States that’s still a bit of a secret,” she said. “It’s one of those places that’s really special – I’m really looking forward to playing.”

Find out more about Rickie Lee Jones on her website (rickieleejones.com). To learn more about the 30A Songwriters Festival, check out 30Asongwritersfestival.com.

The Artist

By Sean Dietrich



A Birmingham art museum. I was younger. I had driven four hours to get here. I was wearing my nice clothes. And I was very excited. This was one of the high points of my life.

I had money in my pocket and a ticket stub for the exhibit.

I've never been what you'd call an "art-exhibit guy." People in big cities probably go to exhibits all the time. But the only art I ever knew were the drawings on the boys restroom wall drawn by Bobby Carmichael. And those weren't exactly pictures of the apostles.

I was giddy in that museum lobby. The whole day took on a dreamlike quality.

"Pinch me," I said to the elderly woman ahead of me in line.

The woman laughed. She was leaning on a walker. She was from Massachusetts.

"When he died," she said. "They made his studio into a museum. It's not far from my house. Toured it once. If you ever go to Massachusetts, you should see it."

"Maybe one day," I said.

This was the first and only art exhibition I had ever attended. And to me, it wasn't just an exhibit. This was seeing an old friend.

Throughout my lifetime I had spent a lot of time admiring his paintings, which once graced the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

And as silly as it sounds, this artist got me through some hard times.

"My husband met him once," the old woman went on. "Said he was a real nice man."

Our single-file line was hedged with velvet ropes. I was wearing my fancy jeans. My hair had just been cut by a classy barber in Mountainbrook who charged me thirty bucks. It was highway robbery.

But it's not every day you go to an art exhibit. I was really putting on the dog.

A museum employee unlatched the velvet rope. People emptied into the gallery. Each wall was adorned with gold-leaf framed canvases. It was euphoria.

The first painting I saw was of a soldier. World War II. Smudged face. He was seated on the ground, cigarette in his mouth. He looked

battle worn. And my breath caught in my throat.

I had to sit on a bench to dab my eyes. I don't know why. Probably because I'm a sentimental fool.

Or maybe it was because when I was a child, someone in my neighborhood was throwing out three boxes of *Saturday Evening Post* magazines. I found the cardboard boxes on the curb. Each magazine cover was one of his paintings. They were the most beautiful images I ever saw.

So I took them home. I spent an afternoon with a pair of scissors, clipping covers from magazines. I tacked the pictures to my bedroom walls. Then I clipped more paintings out of a compilation book of his work.

My room was soon plastered with the ratty pages of antique periodicals. My mother was thrilled.

And on the day my father died, I locked myself in that same bedroom and stared at these paintings until I fell asleep.

There was the painting of the woman and her boy, praying over their food in a crowded Depression-era restaurant.

The painting of two teenagers in a little diner. It's titled "After the Prom." It shows a boy and girl. He wears a tux. She wears a formal dress. They are so skinny.

A brown-haired GI who looks like a young version of my grandfather, peeling potatoes with his mother.

In 1916 the young artist sold his first magazine cover to the "Post" when he was just 22. World War I was on. Germany had begun attacking

ships in the Atlantic. A Spanish influenza pandemic was on the near horizon. And he was painting pictures.

He went on to illustrate 322 covers for the "Post," over a period of 47 years. Each work was a masterstroke painted on canvases he primed with cheap Benjamin Moore housepaint. And each work arrests your attention.

He was commissioned to paint the portraits of Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson, Kennedy, and Nixon. And after a long career spanning four wars, and the most turbulent time in history, he once told someone, "I paint life as I would like it to be."

That's how I felt sitting on that museum bench. His paintings showed the world as I wanted it to be. A pretty place, with good people, and lots of heart.

The old woman with the walker sat beside me. We were together in silence for a long time, admiring the view.

If he had lived today, chances are nobody would have noticed him. His work would have been laughed at. It would have been too quaint for critics. Too charming. Not enough gore.

But I admire him. Not just for his steady hand and attention to detail. But because he had a second pair of eyes. He could look beneath daily life and see things others missed.

When others saw America, browbeaten by war, breadlines, Great Depressions, dust storms, politicians, and the greed of industrialism, he only saw her beauty. And he painted her that way. In the midst of hell, somehow, he illustrated kindness, childhood, and the simplicity of love.

A kid at the vet's office.

A young man singing to his hound.

A blue-collar man, seeing his son off to college.

A beautiful black girl walking to school, accompanied by four U.S. Marshals.

A hopeless young redhead, trying so hard to play a trumpet.

The old woman patted my shoulder and said, "He sure was good, wasn't he?"

He was better than good. He was Norman Rockwell.

And I wish we had more like him. 🐶



Sean Dietrich, nicknamed Sean of the South, chronicles life in the American South. Find him online at seandietrich.com.



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Sandscapes

Fresh Perspectives on
American Landscape Paintings

By Helen Mitsios



Some folks associate landscape paintings with museums, fusty prints, or maybe glimpsed on the backdrop wall of a royal household. But now, with artists relearning the fine skills to produce realistic landscape painting, that most difficult genre with so many trees and leaves, or so many waves and spindrifts to render — landscape paintings are back. And their comeback is in tune with the current spirit of climate change and preserving the earth for future generations.

In fact, realistic landscape art never really went away, and now that you read this, you'll start noticing it in TV shows like *Billion*, *Succession*, and *Madame Secretary* and on the walls of photogenic homes in design magazines like *Architectural Digest*. Or watch the evolution of landscape painting in an Emmy award-winning PBS series *Landscapes Through Time*. The fine art gallery Questroyal in Manhattan takes out full-page



color ads to sell original Hudson River School paintings and their newer brethren. The art world is re-discovering the power of nature to elevate the spirit, though the words romanticism and spirituality are seldom used in the commercial art community. Then again, those words aren't used much anywhere these days.

It seems the world needs a dose of beauty, not just art that shocks or offends. Been there, done that, and anyway, nobody did it better than the Surrealists or Dadaists who were reacting to world wars. Now looking fresh to the jaded contemporary eye, the aesthetics of restrained harmony feel new again. Landscape paintings offer immersion in natural beauty and escapist fantasy.

Now select schools around the world are teaching rigorous atelier techniques beginning with cast drawing and building to color mastery and glazing techniques brought to glory in the Renaissance. Stepping into the

Florence Academy of Art in Italy or Grand Central Atelier in New York, one is carried back in time to a magical space where standards of rigorous high gatekeeping are kept. The atelier curriculum nonetheless teaches the technical skills needed to produce, for example, the fabulous backlit clouds of a J.M.W Turner sky.

Picking up on where university art departments left off, the last twenty years have seen a huge growth in the atelier school movement in which the traditional realist painting skills that almost disappeared during the last century were kept alive by a tiny handful of artists working in obscurity and passing down their knowledge to a tiny group of students.

Hard to imagine that the drawing and painting skills needed to paint a Hudson River-type landscape were almost lost. In America, knowledge of these “old master” techniques hung by a thread during the long reign of Modernism. Actually, two threads. One group descended from the 19th Century Académie Julian in Paris, passing through artist and teacher Ted Seth Jacobs (born 1927), and culminating in today’s Grand Central Atelier in New York, and its landscape-oriented Hudson River Fellowship. Another lineage passed through artist Richard Lack, who studied with R.H. Ives Gammell (1893-1981) in Boston. Gammell, in turn, had studied with William Paxton (1869-1904), whose teacher in Paris was Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904).

The new crop of realistic landscape art is not only ambitious and skilled, but its poetic artistry values the timelessness and beauty of nature that gave birth to America’s first home-grown art movement, the Hudson River School. Environmentalists and climate change activists might do no better than point to the scenery of landscape paintings as a reminder of what we once had, now have, and what we stand to lose.

More attuned to today’s environmentalism than to the 19th century age of “Manifest Destiny,” the excitement of these images is still fueled by the artist’s take on the power and beauty of nature. Consider Tony Winters, a prize-winning American contemporary landscape painter who met with us in his art studio that was formerly an outdoor terrace that he enclosed with windows to capture daylight while he paints.

Why is landscape painting considered one of the most difficult genres of painting?

Winters: One reason is the challenge of making a convincing illusion of depth, with the foreground, middle ground, and far distance each satisfying the viewer’s eye. Another is finding ways to render complicated surfaces like foliage, waves, or clouds. On a practical level, painting outdoors means dealing with bugs, sunburn, and wind – but working outdoors in nature is the best part of landscape painting.

Your painting of a beach and sailboat in Newport is so realistic. What drew you to Newport?

Newport was my father’s hometown, and we visited often during my childhood. A lot of art is made from childhood memories, -- at least that’s what Wordsworth said. I think. Plus, Newport has spectacular light and a great tradition of sailing.

What advice do you have for artists who want to push beyond “loose” painting and acquire the skills of realistic landscape painting?

Draw, draw, draw. Artists in prior centuries were expert draftsmen before they ever used color. In fact, some of the great Hudson River school artists such as Asher Durand and John F. Kensett started their careers as engravers. Take a look at a dollar bill and you can appreciate the drawing skills these guys brought to their art.



Painting by Tony Winters



How do you choose the composition of the landscape you’ll paint?

Composition is the most important thing, and it’s the hardest. I try to find a foreground that will lead the viewer into the picture, and then keep the eye moving through the space. I like to have a feeling of movement in my landscapes, whether it’s water moving, or just the dynamic shapes of the landscape. That’s what I look for in building my compositions.

An artist who inspires you?

So many, but right now I’m really obsessed with John Frederick Kensett, who died in 1872, but his late work still looks nearly contemporary. He has a great combination

of drawing skills and the ability to portray light. He was considered a “Luminist.” He did many paintings of the beaches along Long Island Sound.

What’s your personal favorite beach?

Hanalei Beach on Kauai.

Why should people buy original art pieces in today’s world of digital screens?

A good landscape painting will last for centuries and invites the viewer into a world that feels immersive and real in a way screens just don’t. I think that because a real person experienced the wonder of nature in a real place and had the skills and took the effort to share that experience is what gives art the power to move us emotionally and elevate our spirit. 🌊

To learn more about Tony Winters, visit his website (tonywintersfineart.com) or follow him on Facebook (@[TonyWintersArt](https://www.facebook.com/TonyWintersArt)) and Instagram (@[tonywinters.art](https://www.instagram.com/tonywinters.art)).

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A Symphony of Flavors

Concert pianist-turned-chef Fleetwood Covington brings artistry to the plate

By Abigail Abesamis Demarest
Photos by Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa



Chef Fleetwood Covington

Clear key lime pie, carrot glass, floral laminated pasta, and a Jackson Pollock-inspired dessert “sketch” plated and served directly on the dinner table probably aren’t things that you’d expect to see on the menu of a fancy steakhouse, but Fleetwood Covington isn’t your average chef.

Covington was a concert pianist for 16 years, traveling around the world playing for royalty, emirates, wealthy clients with private boats, and more. A two-week tour around Europe turned into a five-year stay, and on one morning in Glasgow, he awoke with the realization that he didn’t want to be a professional musician anymore. “I just knew I didn’t want to do it anymore—it was very clear,” Covington said. “I’ve been playing since I was six and doing professional work since I was nine, and I’ll always look back to those years and be glad I did it, but it was over. It was bittersweet.”

He flew home, unsure of his next step after pursuing a single passion for most of his life up to that point. Ultimately, Covington decided that he would learn how to make pasta at Seagar’s Prime Steaks & Seafood at the Hilton Sandestin Golf Resort & Spa in South Walton, Florida. He had no formal culinary training to speak of, but that didn’t stop him from getting a job at an award-winning steakhouse and climbing up the ranks to become their executive chef in just five years.

Working at Seagar’s was a crash course in culinary, and Fleetwood got to learn from industry greats. “I’ve only been interested in two things professionally in my entire life: music and cooking,” he said. “When I become interested in something, I go all in.” Every week, he reads three to four books on chemistry, food trends, or other related topics. He looks at what the top chefs in the world are putting on the plate and thinks of ways to reinvent food, whether in concept, flavor, ingredients, or presentation. “With my lack of formal training, I feel like I need to prove myself even more, so I work around the clock.”





I really want guests to enjoy and feel like they are discovering something through the food that they eat when they dine at Seagar's.





Of course, a lack of formal training isn't always a bad thing. For Covington, thinking outside of the box comes naturally because he never learned any of the rules. "I get to operate pretty fearlessly," he said. At a private dinner event, Covington served an amuse-bouche featuring rosé Champagne, which he turned into rice noodles. For his first-ever summer menu, Covington created a monochromatic ceviche featuring cubes of bluefin tuna, watermelon, and heirloom tomatoes. All of the ingredients were chosen and treated so that they were the exact same color and size, and diners couldn't tell what they were biting into. "I really want guests to enjoy and feel like they are discovering something through the food that they eat when they dine at Seagar's," he said. That same summer menu featured a deconstructed banana pudding (inspired by the one his grandmother used to make) and key lime pie with a transparent filling (which still somehow tasted like a creamy key lime pie). When writing menus, the guest experience is top of mind for Covington and his team. "How can we present something to the table that produces conversation?" Covington said. He noted that one of the most gratifying parts of his job is when diners try something out of their comfort zone (like Hungarian honey truffle ice cream) and walk away with a more open perspective.

For Covington, a meal at Seagar's is more than just what's on the plate (though that is very important)—it's about the experience. At a fall vintner dinner, floral centerpieces at each table were revealed to be mini bonfires. When lit, the bonfires filled the room with the scent of rosemary, thyme, and hickory. The scent and soft lights of the bonfire made the perfect backdrop for a s'mores-inspired dessert. It turns out that dinner service isn't so different from a concert, and Covington makes a masterful maestro.

For more information on Seagar's Prime Steaks & Seafood, visit seagars.com.



Photo: Alan Mercer

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BEBE BUELL

By Will Estell

THE JOURNEY OF A MUSE AMONG ROCK 'N ROLL ROYALTY

If you consider yourself a fan of rock music, and particularly a fan of the rock scene that was so prevalent in the '70s and '80s, you are likely well aware of Bebe Buell and her intricate ties to some of the most well-known among rock's royalty.

With a trajectory and sphere of influence that far exceeded what some might have inaccurately coined a "groupie," Bebe fits more appropriately into the "muse" category—a label she not only openly accepts, but one she has also adopted in her larger-than-life rock and roll journey traversing five decades.

On the heels of her newest autobiographical book, *Rebel Soul: Musings, Music & Magic*, I sat down with Bebe to find out a little more about the life of this small-town Virginia girl turned famous model, songwriter, performer, bestselling author, and American rock culture icon.

Your new book, *Rebel Soul: Musings, Music & Magic*, is available for preorder online and hits bookstores in the first quarter of this year. Tell me a little about the book and what readers can expect this time around.

Some of my experiences were so personal and outrageous that trying to tell them in a shorter version was somewhat impossible. Hence, a few of the journeys were filled with holes and were left unfinished, to a degree, so I think those same readers will find the new book fills in where the last one left off and tells my stories even better.

Living your life as a newly discovered celeb in NYC in the '70s had to be insane. You literally rolled with, befriended, and dated some of the most iconic figures of rock royalty and pop culture, and you even had a child with Aerosmith frontman, Steven Tyler. Tell me about some of that.

It was everything you can imagine and even more. At times, it seemed almost surreal, but it all happened just as I write it. It was a very different time and place, but one that seems to reverberate what the music and entertainment landscape of the '70s and '80s really were known to be. Living through it wasn't just fun—it was quite the accomplishment and learning experience too.

Your 2001 autobiography, *Rebel Heart*, became a New York Times Bestseller. Did you expect that going in, and what was that like, to bare your soul to that degree in print?

There were so many mixed opinions about my first autobiography. People either loved it or hated it. There were no indifferent critiques, and I've been told that's what real art is about. It ignites passion and, in some cases, even hatred. You've got to toughen up your skin when you pen an autobiography, as there is always going to be someone who hates the way they're depicted, and there will often be hurt feelings somewhere.

I was 48 when St. Martin's Press published *Rebel Heart*. I remember sitting in the make-up chair, getting ready to do a 20/20 interview with Chris

Cuomo, when my editor, Elizabeth Beier, came in to tell me we had hit the top 50 on the *Times*' Best Sellers list. We hit number 35 the first week the book was out. Plans were being discussed for me to do a book tour, then tragically 9/11 hit, and the whole world changed for all of us. A book tour was the least important thing then.

You've had quite the illustrious career, from being discovered firsthand by Eileen Ford at 17 to your career as a songwriter and performer to being a bestselling author. Of all those aspects, what do you consider to be the most important to you?

You know, Will, I really think all of them are equally important. I am very much aware of my special place in pop culture, and whether in a book, a song, or spoken words in an interview, the things I have witnessed firsthand are historically relevant to the story I've lived, and I pride myself on being an informed storyteller. I take that very seriously. I always will.

Your music goes back five decades: the B sides, the Gargoyles, the Bebe Buell Band, and you were one of the forward-thinking adopters of releasing independent music, without a major label's constraints on your creativity. What's your take on the constantly changing climate and future of the current music industry?

Those were great times, but they were definitely full of adventure and change, in and out of the music and



Photo: Bebe Buell

Photo: Amy Phillips



Photo: Bebe Buell



Photo: Guy Furrow



Photo: Bebe Buell

“ time to tell the real story of my life ”

entertainment business. I was self-publishing my music and saw the benefit in holding control and putting out my own work a long time before it became so mainstream to do that—all the way back in the late ‘80s and ‘90s. I always liked the indie route, and I am a big fan of many other indie artists.

You’ve called one of my favorite cities, Nashville, home since about 2013. What drew you to Nash and what’s kept you there?

I came to Nashville in 2012, at the request of the late Eddy Arnold’s grandson, Shannon Pollard, who was putting together a tribute album to honor his grandfather. Until that trip, I hadn’t been to Nashville in a decade or more, when I had toured and played shows here at times. I always thought the world of Eddy and Shannon was a fan of my music and wanted to do a little something different, so I was honored to be a part of the record. I did “I’ll Hold You in My Heart.”

During that one trip, I fell absolutely in love with Nashville, and I just felt a calling that I was supposed to live here. I called Jimmy up and said, “I want to move to Nashville.” He asked, “Do I get to see it first?” I was like, “I guess, if you need to.”

We sold our house where we were in New Jersey, and bought a great place that was just being built about two miles from downtown. We later sold that house and broke ground on a new home in Franklin, which we built during the pandemic. That was definitely an experience, but we love it here.

How long have you been vacationing along Florida’s Scenic Highway 30A?

We first started going to 30A about ten years ago, right after moving to Nashville. It’s just so easy to get to and, as you know, so many of our Nashville friends go there. We started out going to Grayton Beach and actually stayed right across the street from Red Bar in an apartment above Zoo Gallery. Later, we started going to Seacrest Beach, Seagrove, and Seaside and exploring the entire area. We love it there, and I think your beaches are the best anywhere in the US. I grew up near Virginia Beach and have always loved the beach. I’d really like to have a house there in time. Actually, I would love a place there and one in Asbury Park.

Has your daughter, Liv, ever visited 30A with you?

She hasn’t been, though that is something I really dream of getting to do with her and my grandchildren. I’d love to get a house in Alys Beach, Rosemary, Seaside, or Seagrove and just spend a week with all of them there. I’d love to introduce them to your area and have them experience just why Jimmy and I love it so much.

I also hear you have an upcoming documentary in the works. Tell me about it.

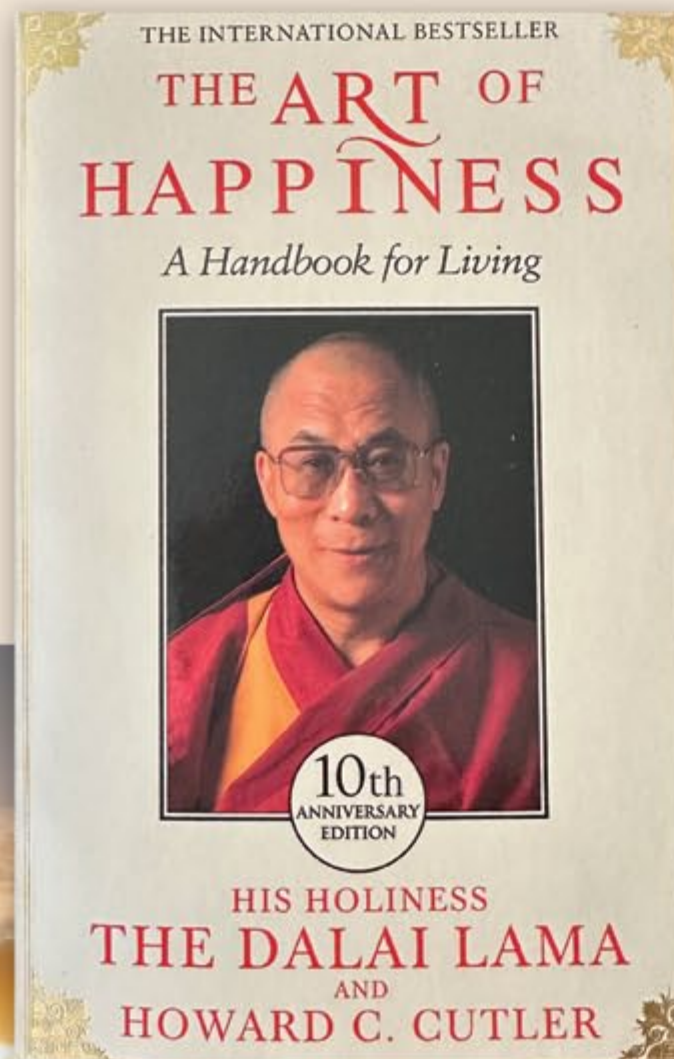
During the COVID break, I realized that now is the time to tell the real story of my life, including things I’ve never talked about before. We’ve been shooting the documentary for over a year and hope to have it out on the film festival circuit by 2025.

I’m working with Director Gabby Bryan to bring it to fruition. I’ve known Gabby for many years, and like me, she came up in the world of rock, as she’s the daughter of David Bryan, the keyboardist for Bon Jovi. Gabby is not only young, but she is brilliantly creative and has a fierce work ethic and vision. I’m really excited about the whole project, and I think people will really love the finished product.

Any hobbies or interests you have that might surprise fans and readers?

I love to decorate. I help my friends and family decorate their homes. I like to design clothes. I actually enjoy organizing things. That was one aspect that I got really involved in with the coming new book. There were hundreds and hundreds of old photos to go through—many even black-and-white pictures—to have considered among the many that would make the pages of *Rebel Soul*. I really enjoyed seeing them all again and taking that pictorial ride back in time. I’m also a big animal-lover and love spending time with our two dogs. And, of course, I love my three grandchildren and spending time together when we can. They’re 18, 8, and 7, so I’ve been a grandmother for a while now. It’s certainly not what the stereotypical grandmother figure used to be, but I adore all three of them, just as I do Liv.

For more information about Bebe Buell, her new book, and her book tour—including a tour stop at Sundog Books in Seaside, Florida—visit BebeBuell.org.



An Interview With the Founder of the Positive Psychology Movement

By Helen Mitsios

If you didn't know that Dr. Howard Cutler is the "father" of the Positive Psychology Movement, you're not alone. Co-authored with His Holiness the Dalai Lama nearly 25 years ago, *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living* (AOH) ended up on The New York Times bestseller list for 97 weeks, and it has been translated into over 50 languages. It became forerunner to the multitude of popular books and best sellers that we've seen over the past two decades on the subject of happiness. The book is still in print, having become a perennial classic on the subject.

Even though he's one of the most important figures of the twenty-first century's "happiness" movement, Dr. Cutler chooses to decline razzle-dazzle publicity. He spent time as a psychiatrist in private practice as well as at a famous "celebrity" rehab clinic before deciding to devote himself full-time to his writing, deep study, meditation, private AOH studies with individuals, and holding worldwide keynote addresses, teachings, and workshops. In fact, one of his next public appearances will be at an international happiness summit in Como this March 2023, in case anyone needs a reason to visit Italy.

Modest, compassionate, and filled with humor and wit, in his downtime, he can be found in his hometown of Scottsdale, Arizona, where he likes to read just about anything, he says, and classic Western novels, in particular.

We asked Dr. Cutler if he's happy and other questions:

How did you first meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama?

In 1981-82, when I was a senior in medical school at the University of Arizona College of Medicine, I applied for a research grant to study traditional Tibetan medicine, a unique healing system that dates back many centuries. I was given three months of senior year medical school credit along with \$100 per week to study at the Tibet Medical Center in Dharamsala, India, a thriving Tibetan community in the foothills of the Himalayas. The Dalai Lama's older brother was director of the Tibetan Medical Centre at the time of my stay.

I was put up at a government guesthouse where I ended up living across the hallway from the Dalai Lama's brother and his family. They first suggested that I meet the Dalai Lama and helped arrange that first meeting.

What was your first impression of the Dalai Lama when you met him?

I remember sitting in a small room just outside his living room, starting to get really nervous, listening to my heart pound. I wasn't certain about proper protocol. The main thing that struck me at first was that he was so normal! So down to earth! He had a way of quickly putting one at ease. He had a way of making people feel as if they were deeply listened to. One could feel his kindness.

Has what it takes to lead a happy life changed at all since you wrote the AOH?

Well, there can be many components to a happy life, beginning with having one's basic survival needs met.



That hasn't changed in the last 25 years. Now, one of the fundamental principles of the AOH approach to happiness is: once we have our basic survival needs met, at that point happiness is determined more by the state of one's mind than by external circumstances, conditions, or events. The validity of these fundamental AOH principles and the effectiveness of the various practices has also not changed. After all, the basic structure and functioning of the human brain and of the human mind are the same.

But there has, in fact, been a "sea change" in the pursuit of happiness in Western society. Prior to the publication of the *Art of Happiness*, the general public demonstrated little to no interest in reading about happiness and little interest

in exploring the science of happiness, its causes, and its practical benefits.

A recent news article suggested that people should be screened for anxiety. Does the application of AOH principles reduce anxiety?

Absolutely, yes! There's now a large body of scientific evidence showing that various techniques adapted from Buddhism, including "stabilizing" types of meditation (e.g. "mindfulness meditation") as well as "analytic meditation" (practices very similar to cognitive therapy techniques) can be effective in reducing anxiety.

Here at *Beach Happy*, we're all about the pursuit of happiness, of course. And we also love the beach! Do you have a favorite beach?

I've loved the beach ever since I was a kid, and our family spent the summers at Venice Beach in California. Over the years I've stayed at many beaches around the world, but to be honest there is no single beach that immediately comes to mind as my very favorite. I've enjoyed beaches on islands in tropical climates, in places like Hawaii, the Caribbean, Bali, and others, and I particularly like beaches that are relatively isolated, with lush greenery, pristine white sand beaches, clear warm waters and abundant marine life.

Do you offer workshops for the general public?

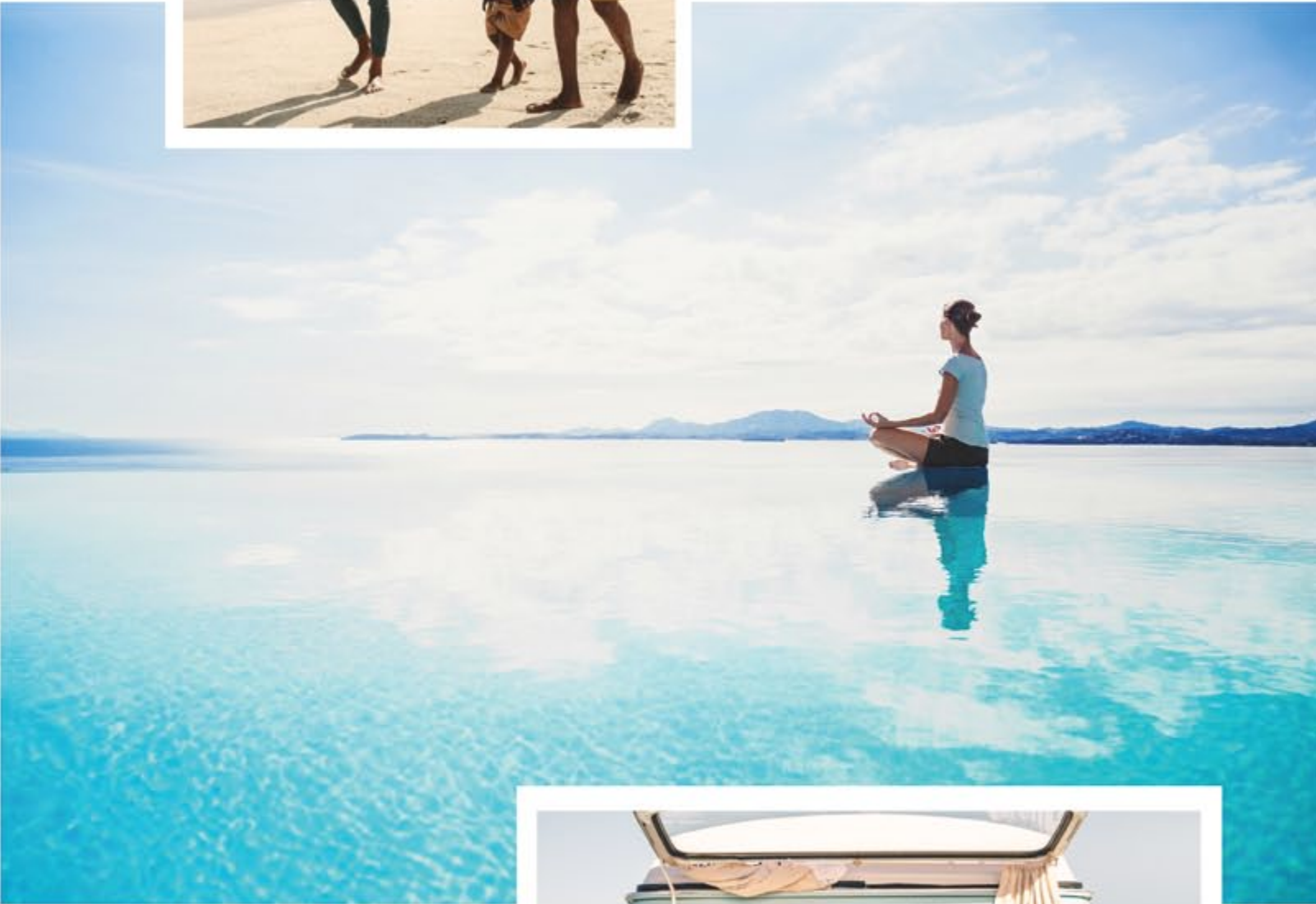
Yes. In fact, it's one of my favorite things. I love having the opportunity to interact with people in person, and of course I'm very passionate about the topics presented in the AOH workshops. For some years, I've been giving three-day AOH workshops every summer at Kripalu, a beautiful retreat center in the Berkshire Mountains. My live workshops were placed on hold due to the COVID shutdowns, but I'm going to resume them in 2023.

I heard you're working on a forthcoming book. Can you tell us something about it?

I'm writing about the birth of Western Buddhism, a movement that's been quietly spreading throughout the Western world over the past two or three decades.

Are you a practicing Buddhist?

I've been asked this question quite a few times over the years, and I always say no. That's because the term "Buddhist" can be a loaded term, with different meanings, connotations, or underlying assumptions depending on the individual. But if





asked to elaborate, I always explain that I’ve adopted certain Buddhist views and practices, focusing on those supported by scientific evidence, which I’ve applied to help maintain a sense of well-being and life satisfaction, to deal more effectively with stress and everyday problems, and to increase my capacity to help others.

Can you describe your personal AOH six-week course?

I originally developed this six-week program in response to people who had read *The Art of Happiness* and wanted me to work with them, as their psychotherapist or “coach.” So, using the book as a text for the program, I follow the same overall structure and sequence of topics as the book. The program includes a private one-on-one phone session with the client once a week, with reading assignments and practical exercises. Six weeks is enough time for structural and functional changes to begin to take place in the brain, the rewiring of neural pathways.

Are you happy? When you’re not, what do you do?

Yes, I’d say I’m happy. I guess on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, I’m customarily somewhere between an 8 and a 9. And personally, I think that’s remarkable, because science has shown there is a strong genetic component to one’s customary level of happiness, what they call a “happiness set point.” I was born with a relatively low happiness set point, with the tendency toward depression when I was young. So, I think that a large part of my current customary level of day-to-day happiness is due to practicing the type of AOH strategies and methods that we’ve been referring to.

Are people less happy now than they were in the past?

Looking at the American population in general, things don’t look good. Some surveys have found that the

average level of happiness among Americans is at a 50-year low. Others have found certain indicators or measures of happiness to be the lowest ever recorded. Depression, anxiety, drug overdoses, and suicides have been skyrocketing in recent years. Of course, the pandemic has had a negative impact on the happiness of Americans and people all over the world, but unhappiness was increasing in our country well before the pandemic

Still, despite this discouraging outlook, I passionately believe that there is cause for hope. After all, science has conclusively shown that there are practical methods to increase personal happiness—steps anyone can take.

What’s the hardest thing about writing a bestselling book?

For myself, I found that the most important factor in writing a successful book was perseverance. Having never written a book before, I decided to take time off from my psychiatric practice to devote all my time to writing the book, estimating it would take no more than six months. And, with the Dalai Lama as co-author, I figured it would be a snap to find a publisher, that they’d be beating down my door to publish it. It ended up taking five years to complete the manuscript. And throughout that entire five-year period I received an endless stream of rejection letters from literary agents and publishers. Once the book was published, it turned out to be the Dalai Lama’s “breakout” book, the book that introduced him to the West, something that he himself has publicly acknowledged. 🙏

What You Get FOR YOUR MONEY

EMERALD COAST

By Jenny Etheredge

Shimmering emerald-green waters and shining white sand beaches unite the coastal communities of the Emerald Coast including Miramar Beach, Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Navarre Beach, and Pensacola Beach. Each town offers its own unique personality from the busy harbor nightlife and wealth of attractions in Destin to the Old Florida feel of Navarre. Whether you're searching for a gulf-front high-rise condominium or a bay-front retreat, there is a plethora of housing options in all price ranges in these coveted Northwest Florida destinations.



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Anne Winicki (850) 960-1179



\$5,850,000

42 W Kingston Road - Rosemary Beach
9 Bed | 10.5 Bath | 6,300 sq. ft.

Upon arrival at this custom designed 6,300 sqft, Rosemary Beach luxury compound, you will immediately sense the meticulous attention to every detail. The covered entry porch at 42 West Kingston Road is completed by a beautiful water fountain with cascading steps that welcome you to the custom-designed and hand-built front door. Owners and guests alike are received at the expansive double-height grand entry foyer which provides a visual connection to all

floors. This grand receiving space is carefully appointed with details such as a custom designed 2 story chandelier, custom forged raw steel handrails, a floating live edge wood staircase, and an elevator to all 3 floors. The well-designed, generous courtyard, surrounded by the living room and master suite, is the quintessential relaxation and entertainment space. It features a large saltwater pool with swim up bar, waterfall, palm trees, a Dominican shell stone lounging area, and a luxurious outdoor covered living area complete with a summer kitchen with a full bar, sitting area, dining banquette, bathroom, and an oversized double sided fireplace.

The Walton Group (850) 797-7930

\$3,345,000

337 Bridge Lane B108
WaterSound Beach
3 Bed | 3.5 Bath | 2,126 sq. ft.

Gulf Front on 30A, views forever in Gated WaterSound Beach with over a mile of private Beach is where you will find this unique 3 Bedroom/3.5 Bath Home placed in the Dunes to capture views of the Blue Green Waters of the Gulf. WaterSound is private with Dunes you find nowhere else on 30A!

Ann Mosely (850) 830-2574



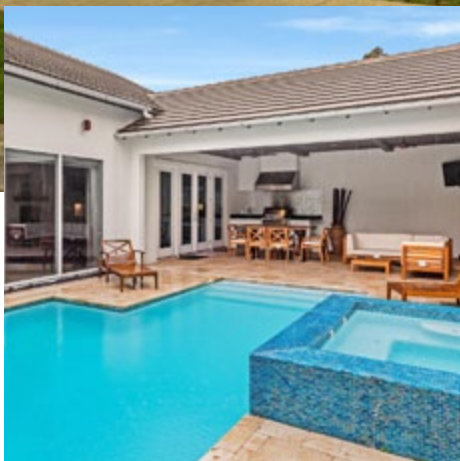


\$2,800,000

53 Siesta Bluff - Destin
5 Bed | 4 Bath | 3,716 sq. ft.

This Modern & Coastal contemporary designed home is located in the upscale gated beach-side community of Destiny East neighborhood. With close beach access, this home is designed for a great rental, primary or second home. This home comes furnished with 5 bedrooms, 4 full bathrooms, and a large open floor plan with a modern timeless design. Entering the foyer, a wall of floor-to-ceiling expansive windows brings in natural light into the main living area which features in-lay reclaimed hardwood floors, with 12' ceilings, a floor-to-ceiling slate gas fireplace that is designed to focus on the gardens & serenity of the outdoor pool area with an outdoor covered kitchen and expansive entertainment area.

Sheila Coffee (850) 797-5998

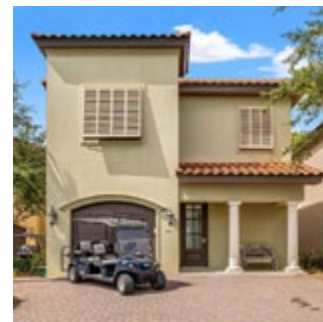


\$4,250,000

114 Lake Loon Drive - Santa Rosa Beach
5 Bed | 4.5 Bath | 5,141 SQFT

This stunning home is artfully situated on the border of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park offering unmatched panoramic views extending through the State Preserve Park, over a rare Coastal Dune Lake, and straight into the Gulf of Mexico. Providing complete luxury in harmony with a flexible family lifestyle, this custom home is the perfect combination. Conveniently located on 30A's peaceful west end, 114 Loon Lake Drive sits close to the bike path and just a short distance to the Stallworth beach access.

Terri Lavender (850) 499-9363



\$1,399,000

1871 Boardwalk Drive - Miramar Beach
4 Bed | 4 Bath | 2,438 sq. ft.

Your perfect beach home awaits in this well-thought-out, updated, spacious home. Located within a gated community, directly on the 5th hole of Baytowne Golf Course, the resort lifestyle offered is second to none. The large corner-like, cul-de-sac lot allows for a large driveway and spacious parking including a 1 car garage. Stepping inside you have a first-level bedroom and full bath before you enter into the grand open living concept adjoined kitchen living and dining rooms. The kitchen features all-new quartz countertops with marble picket tile backsplash. Come see why this home is truly a touch above!

The Neals, Cory + Lisa Neal (850) 598-1655

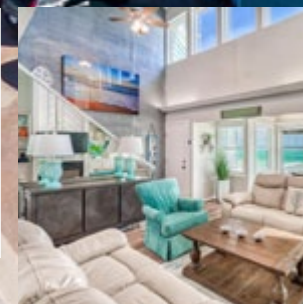


\$2,495,000

1577 Scenic Gulf Drive #9 - Miramar Beach
4 Bed | 4 Bath | 2,340 sq. ft.

Excellent location and directly on the beach, this gulf-front townhome would make a fantastic vacation rental or private family getaway. Recently remodeled and tastefully decorated Seawinds #9 is currently utilized as a vacation rental that sleeps 22. It boasts spectacular views from all 3 levels and a huge beachfront deck that is a great place to soak up the sun.

Matt Williams (850) 598-6461





**30 E Yacht Pond Lane
WaterSound Beach
5 Bed | 5 Bath | 3,466 sq. ft.**

Located behind the main gate of WaterSound Beach you will find this cared-for family vacation home on a beautiful lot backing to a wooded common area with a stream/pond. The well-thought-out floor offers large entertaining areas, abundant natural light, high ceilings, and large bedrooms with attached bathrooms. The fourth level tower has gulf views and tons of light and the detached carriage home will delight your friends/family or serve as a great escape for some peace if needed. WaterSound Beach is one of the premier communities that make up the idyllic 30A corridor.

Scott Cobine (850) 974-9055

\$4,100,000



\$1,995,000

**46 E Seacrest Beach Boulevard – Seacrest Beach
3 Bed | 3.5 Bath | 2,006 SQFT**

This stunning home is artfully situated on the border of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park offering unmatched panoramic views extending through the State Preserve Park, over a rare Coastal Dune Lake, and straight into the Gulf of Mexico. Providing complete luxury in harmony with a flexible family lifestyle, this custom home is the perfect combination. Conveniently located on 30A's peaceful west end, 114 Loon Lake Drive sits close to the bike path and just a short distance to the Stallworth beach access.

Greg Alsobrook (850) 687-5810



\$900,000

**234 Inverrary Drive - Destin
5 Bed | 4 Bath | 3,088 sq. ft.**

Welcome home to beautiful Calusa Bay! This sleek, 3 story, Mediterranean-style luxury home sits on a corner lot and will WOW you from the moment you walk in. Built in 2020 with only one previous owner, it has a bright, open-concept floor plan with 10-foot ceilings and hardwood floors throughout the home. On the main floor, you will find the living area, dining room, and spacious kitchen which features double wall ovens plus a pot filler, a built-in wine fridge, all quartz countertops, and a large waterfall quartz island. This fabulous property is located just minutes away from multiple beach accesses, shopping and some of the best restaurants the Emerald Coast has to offer.

James Ruckel (850) 240-7705

\$1,638,000

**410 Gulfview Circle
Santa Rosa Beach
4 Bed | 4.5 Bath | 2,884 sq. ft.**

Upon entering this stately southern classic beach home you will find a large open floor plan, 10-foot coffered ceilings, large hurricane impact windows, and plantation shutters. The kitchen island is spacious with plenty of storage. A primary bedroom with an adjoining bath and porch is also on the first floor, while the second floor has a second primary bedroom, porch and bath, and more. 4 houses away from the community's pavilion, and gorgeous lagoon-style pool and spa, one of the best on 30A!

Debbie Landers (513) 250-2188



NOW
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Trampled by Turtles’
Alpenglow

Minnesota Band
Finds Harmony With
Milestone Record

By Gen Handley

I grew up camping amongst the Canadian Rockies as a kid. A fond memory from those nights is the red glow that would linger above the jagged mountains after the sun had set for the day. I had never known what to call that until I read more about the title of Trampled by Turtles’ tenth album, *Alpenglow*, which came out on October 28 via Nashville-based Thirty Tigers. Bathing the 11 rollicking and rousing songs, that warm, comforting *alpenglow* is ever-present for big songs like the album opener “It’s So Hard to Hold On” or for the slower ones like “Central Hillside Blues” and the gem of a closer “The Party’s Over” which radiates as much energy even if it’s the more reserved, emotional type.

Ten of the eleven tracks were written by lead singer and guitarist Dave Simonett, whose powerful voice and words are as infectious as the musicianship of the talented sextet and his fellow five band members. Along with the poignant, brutally barebones songwriting, the mesmerizing banjo and fiddle playing raise *Alpenglow* above your average folk rock or alternative country record. And what about the remaining song that Simonett didn’t write? That song is “A Lifetime to Find” which was written by the album’s producer, Wilco’s alt country icon Jeff Tweedy whose signature, tender sonic touch can be felt throughout the record.

Recorded at Wilco’s Chicago studio, The Loft, *Alpenglow* wears its Bluegrass influences proudly on its vinyl sleeve. However, digging deeper and listening closer, there are layers above and below the obvious, including indie rock, progressive rock and even punk rock sensibilities. *Alpenglow* is proof that reinventing the wheel is overrated, demonstrating instead that true artistry lies in reinterpretation rather than reinvention, and something so familiar can feel so new at the same time. But what all this is rooted in is the strength of Simonett’s lyrics and admissions, particularly when it comes to imagery and painting a vivid picture for the listener. In



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the words of “We’re Alright,” he conjures up visions with the following lyrics:

*You woke up in another world
The sky was purple in the worst possible way
A flying pheasant with razor wings
A small green house what a joy it brings
I can only hope for one more day with you*

And in “The Party’s Over,” he describes “old dirty floors and

old smoky barrooms” and getting “drunk on each other and Croatian wine.” These songs are vignettes and short stories that compose a greater narrative that the band aspires and ultimately succeeds in telling on this album.

A band’s tenth record is a major milestone. While *Alpenglow* will be known as THE tenth record, it will also be remembered as the album where they found balance, where they found a place where there were no more boxes to try to fit into. Instead, this is a group of artists who have shed any creative and sonic restraints, making an album that rises and

falls like the optical phenomenon its title revolves around. Because of the lyrical depth, the weight of Simonett’s distilled words, and his chemistry with the five other talented band members, Trampled by Turtles will continue to create songs and records, like *Alpenglow*, that remind us why this is a band we want to pay attention to.

To learn more about Trampled by Turtles, visit their website (trampledbyturtles.com) and follow the band on Facebook (@[TrampledByTurtles](https://www.facebook.com/TrampledByTurtles)) and Instagram (@[tbtduluth](https://www.instagram.com/tbtduluth)).



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