

A CUP OF STRAVINSKI WITH SOME BEATLES ON THE SIDE: AN INTERVIEW WITH MICAH SHEVELOFF

Micah Sheveloff has had a long and intriguing career in music spawning from Boston rock clubs of the 1980s to the brilliant Voodoo Jets in the early 2000s and beyond. Sheveloff's latest solo single, "Stand Me Up Again" is as a brilliant piece of art pop that feels like a breath of fresh air in today's congested cookie-cutter pop scene. We had the pleasure of interviewing Micah to learn more about his illustrious career that includes working with some rather big names such as Gary Cherone of Extreme.

Your father was a music professor. Was music ever-present in your childhood?

Music was present from birth, predominantly classical music and classical piano lessons until I discovered the Monkees and Partridge Family on TV. But my music-everywhere childhood certainly became the foundation for my journey in popular music. My father was a mean SOB, so that darkness is part of who I am as well.

When did you become interested in music?

As a child, I was interested but of course, turned off by long lessons and hours of practice. My parents also enrolled me in a serious children's choir in greater Boston called Youth Pro Musica, which still exists today. But I'd sit in the basement and hammer away rock chord changes on an old upright to the dismay of my parents.

How would you describe your music?

I struggle to describe my music and my genre. I have had influences from Stravinsky to The Beatles and some 70s TOP 40 pop. I guess my music strives to blend pretty, melodic compositions with often dark or serious lyrical content.

Who are your favorite artists and why?

I love the bands Dada and Cheap Trick. I love Crowded House. The Beach Boys captivated me on an emotional level. Those artists blend pretty and dark, they draw me in. And the writing is so thoughtful.

Your bio says that the 1980s was your "baptism into the world of rock". This is when you played with some big names, such as Gary Cherone. Can you tell us a bit more about that period in your life?

How great is the new Extreme record?!? I got to play with Gary for about a year pre-Extreme in the Boston scene, and wow was it fun! But I was just crawling out from under the crushing weight of classical piano and finding my way with modern music. Gary was, and is, an inspiration. But it was such a trip to play loud rock and roll for enthusiastic crowds back in those

days. I played in a band called The Detours as well, and they had a local hit called "Stuck In My Car" (on YouTube), and I am wearing a polished cotton women's blouse. Gotta love the 80s!!

Your song "Stand Me Up Again" is a fantastic indie-pop number. What inspired the song?

I have been standing side-by-side with dear friends who have battled addiction, and the song was written as a nod to their strength and perseverance to forge ahead. I played with several artists who did not make it – I think we all have, sadly. My producer these days, a gifted chap named Jason Pennock, helped me bring this version of the song to life.

The debut album of your band The Voodoo Jets was produced by the indie-rock legend David Minehan, who has played guitar with Aerosmith and The Replacements, how did that happen?

Ha! Sir David is indeed a legend and part of the Boston scene I am so proud to have emerged from. I remember playing the same bill with his band, The Neighborhoods, back in the day. I was hunting for a producer and two people suggested that I reach out to Dapper Dave. I am so glad that I did, he is a gem of a human and a heck of an artist.

Why did you decide to go solo after The Voodoo Jets?

Excellent question! I was the primary songwriter in the 'Jets, and I had a deep hunger to try and sing my own shit, though I don't have near the range that Perrouna does (Voodoo vocal genius). It can be hard to write a song and hand it over to another singer, though Francesco was certainly graceful about it! So it was just a matter of making another leap of faith and working hard. My first solo record, called "Exhibitionist", is full of vocal moments that make me cringe. But without that first step, I'd not be the artist I am now.

You've produced Beth Patella's solo album, "Lines In My Fingers". How is being the producer different from being the artist?

Another great question! I was working at that time with New York City guitar monster Marc Shulman, and when I heard Beth's demos, I felt she was headed down the wrong path. So, I gathered my amazing band and we learned her songs, recorded them, and I produced each one, including writing out cello parts, arranging harmonies, etc. But the moment from those sessions that sticks in my head is when Shulman produced my piano work on one track that had me stymied for a moment—he stopped me, gave his input, and made the song better for it. Love the muse, love the gift!!

If you could go back in time and give advice to your younger self, what would it be?

Wow ... I suppose I would tell myself to write and sing my songs starting at a younger age. Hit the circuit way before I actually did as a solo artist. But I also realize that the journey has brought me gift after gift and so much perspective, so I truly have no remorse. I had a dream one day. I'd play a song with Cheap Trick ... and now Gary Cherone has done that, so I borrow parts of his journey from time to time. I am making music, I feel super fortunate.

You can find out more about Micah Sheveloff here: <https://micahsheveloff.com/>

And you can stream his latest single here: "[Stand Me Up Again](#)"

Review by [Tom Tikka](#) for The MBTM music blog