

OUR FINDS

Behind Their Music

DON'T FALL FOR THE
SAME OLD SONG. WE'VE
LENT AN EAR TO SOME
LOCAL TALENT TO MAKE
OUR TOP PICKS IN
BANDS AND MUSICIANS
PLAYING EVERYTHING
FROM CROWD-PLEASING
COVER SONGS TO
ORIGINAL TUNES.



Caravan of Thieves

PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Adrien Boom*
TEXT BY *Nicole Gull McElroy and Kristan Zimmer*

Caravan of Thieves
caravanofthieves.com
BRIDGEPORT

Fuzz and Carrie Sangiovanni describe the music they play with their band Caravan of Thieves as having “a little satire and darkness but fun and inviting, too... almost like a Tim Burton movie.” That might be because the group — which includes violinist Ben Dean and upright bass player Brian Anderson — found its way almost magically to its music. When it first formed in 2008, the band held just two rehearsals before recording a demo. “It was an instant mesh,” says Fuzz, who joins Carrie on the acoustic guitar. Since then, Caravan has developed quite a following with its gypsy swing sound and fantastical performances that include percussive breakouts using buckets, hubcaps, pots and pans. In July, the band released its live disc, *Mischief Night*. Now it is touring through the Midwest, Canada and New England with Tom Tom Club, while preparing for its annual Halloween concert October 29 on a boat called the *Anabel Lee*. And as for the name? When the band was coming together, Fuzz happened to be reading a biography of gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt. Two parts of the book struck a chord: the gypsy lifestyle Reinhardt embodied and a childhood in Paris peppered with petty theft and con artistry. “It sounded fun and edgy and mysterious,” says Fuzz.

FAVORITE PLACE TO REHEARSE: The cemetery (specifically Mountain Grove Cemetery in Bridgeport where P.T. Barnum is buried, one block from the Sangiovannis’ condo).

Otis and the Hurricanes
otisandthehurricanes.com
FAIRFIELD

For the past 11 years, Otis and the Hurricanes have been bringing a healthy dose of New Orleans to Fairfield County. The band, which plays originals written by its members, was born of keyboard player Joe

Najmy and guitarist Chris Cross. The two then managed to cobble together five other members (Doug Bernstein, Chris Bishop, Rick Quintinal, Richard Crooks and Crispin Cieo) who shared a passion for Louisiana-style rock and blues. In “real” life, though, their day jobs vary tremendously from a kitchen designer (Cross) to a web business owner (Bernstein) to a full-time, professional musician (Quintinal). “Basically, the band was put together for us, not with the intention of going out and playing weddings or anything like that,” says Cross. “It’s just grown.” The group’s style is soulful and playful, with original songs including “Alligator Soufflé” and “I Don’t Have a Dial Tone.” You can find them playing in local spots such as Redding Road House and The Shack Hometown Grill in Fairfield, as well as a summertime stint on Block Island. The band name came from Cross’ childhood nickname, Otis. As with many childhood memories, Cross can’t really remember where it came from, but the Hurricanes part was inspired by the popular New Orleans cocktail (to which none of the band’s members are strangers).

MUSICAL INFLUENCES: Tab Benoit, T-Bone Walker, Fats Domino and Jimmy Vaughan.

Ten Feet Deep
tenfeetdeep.com
BEDFORD, NY

Brendan Ryan, Pete Chema, Alexander Craig and Mike Leff met in high school and held their first concert at the bottom of a friend’s empty swimming pool, in the 10-foot-deep end. And so, Ten Feet Deep was born. While the self-described rock/pop band started off with a bang — opening for Avril Lavigne and Justin Timberlake at Manhattan’s Hammerstein Ballroom (“It was freaking incredible,” recalls Craig) — the guys broke up temporarily when they went off to college (Manhattanville, Yale, SUNY Purchase and Lafayette, respectively). Now, though, they’re back in New York and ready to give this music thing a real go. In fact, over the summer the band hired a manager and won

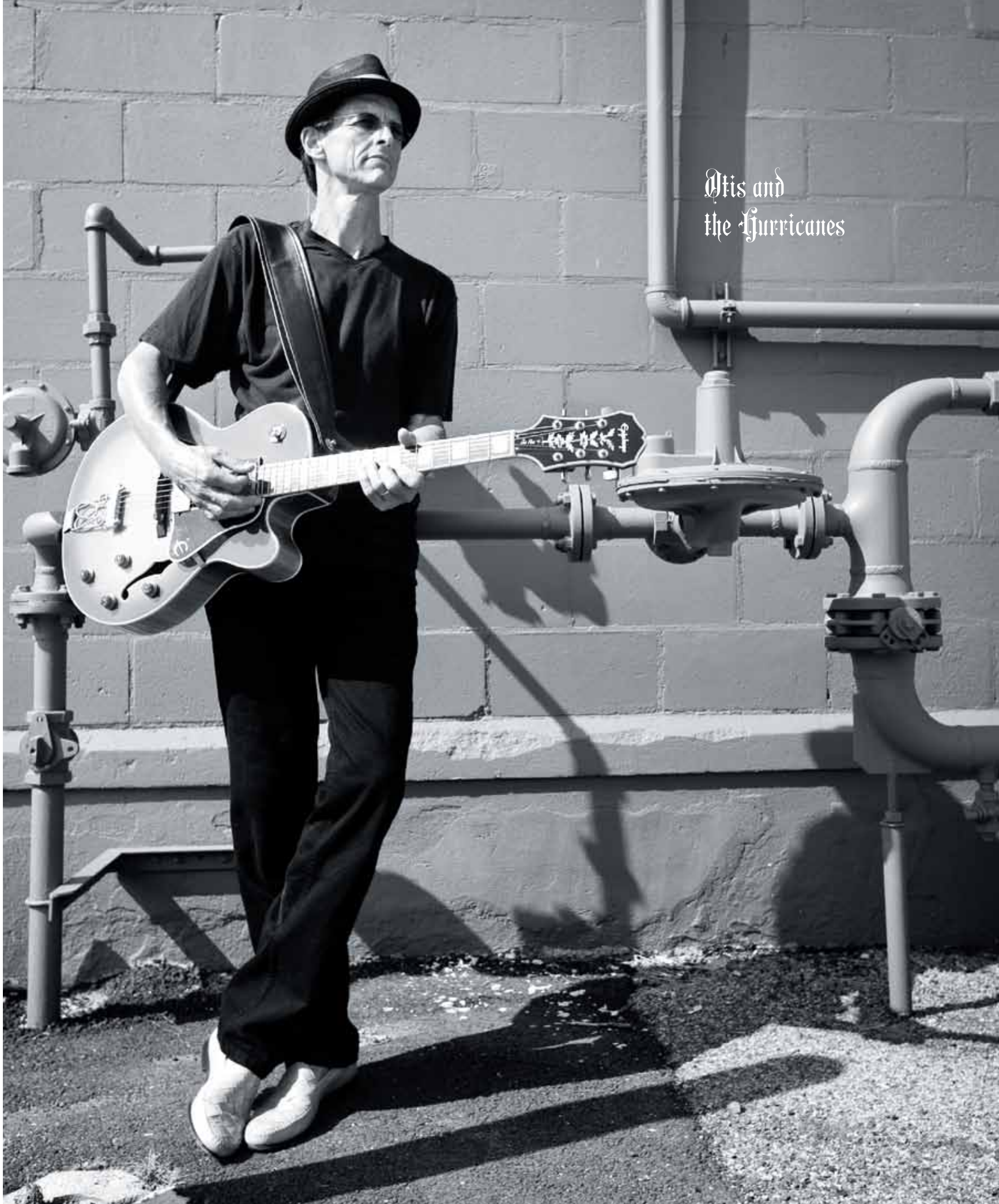
a spot opening at Alive at Five in Stamford. Craig, who works part-time at a florist in Westchester County, says the band’s sound is incredibly hard to define because it’s so well-rounded. “We listen to Ratatat and Louis Armstrong and Benny Goodman and Rush,” says Craig. I’ll freaking listen to anything and like it.”

GUILTY PLEASURE: “Taylor Swift,” admits Craig. “I’m pretty much shameless. I’ll definitely crank Taylor Swift in the car.”

Fingersleeve
myspace.com/fingersleeve
STAMFORD

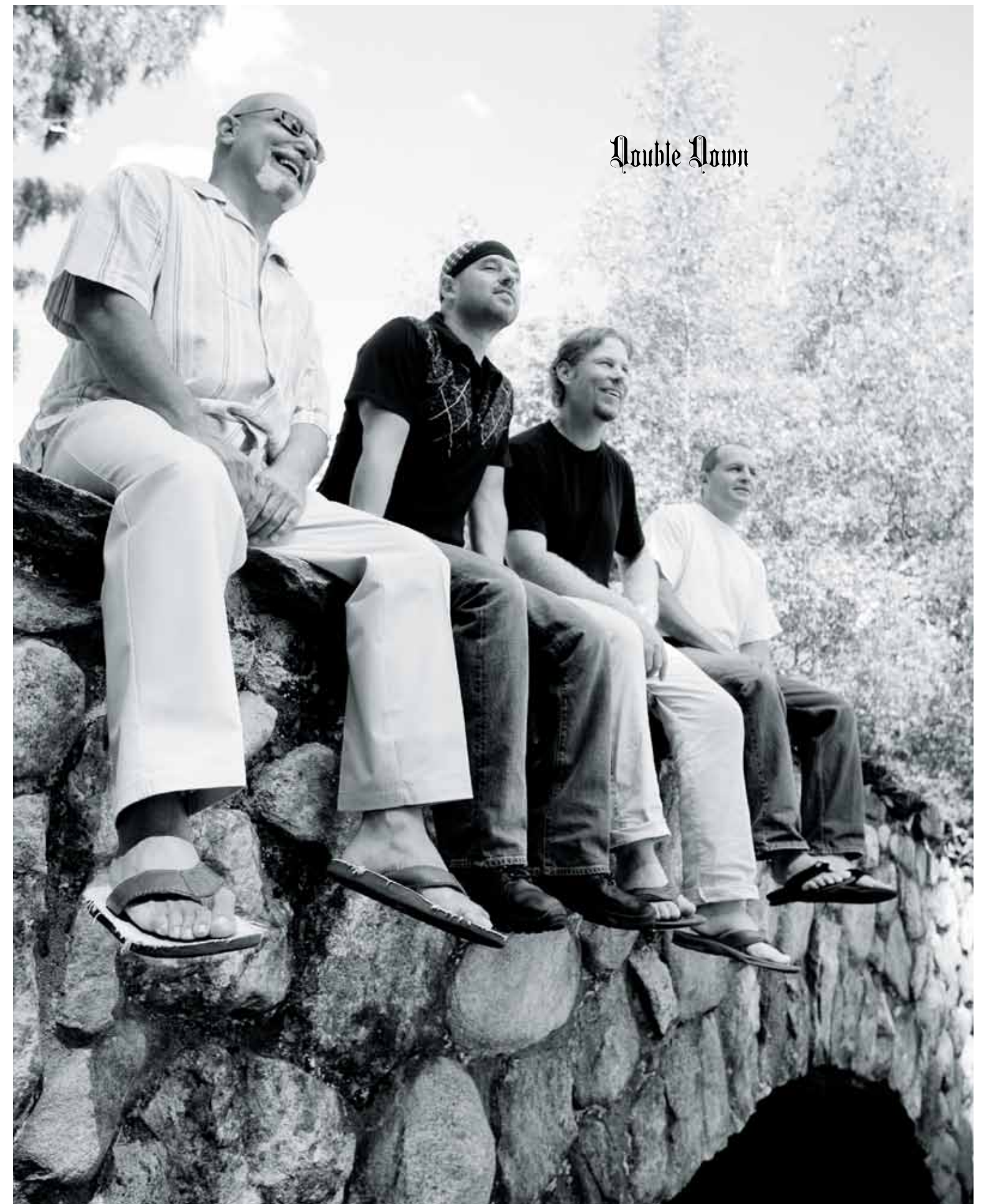
Childhood friends Rob “Fingers” Phelps and Brennan Gildersleeve played together in a self-described “mildly successful” band called In and Out in Boulder, CO, in their youth, but it had been 20 years before the duo reunited about a year and a half ago. “In my early twenties I was in a couple different bands trying to make it a career,” says Gildersleeve, a Greenwich native who lives in Wilton. “I realized pretty quickly that I better get a real job and do music for fun.” Now Gildersleeve works for Starwood Hotels and Phelps runs a printing company in Westport. In the group’s new iteration, Dave Hirschman plays guitar and the band also enjoys occasional appearances by Tarry Canada (who describes himself as “a drifter, an enigmatic sex symbol, a poet, a dancer, a leader, an optimist...motivated not by the money, or the adoration of millions of fans, but by the raw pulse of the music.”). The honky-tonk/country blues band plays original tunes like “Clint Eastwood’s Apes” and “Old Harmonica” and “unique and slightly obscure” covers like “Can’t Let Go” by Lucinda Williams and “Choctaw Bingo” by James McMurtry. Find them at their favorite venue, Seaside Tavern, or at Tigin Irish Pub, Crab Shell, Murphy’s Townhouse Café and The Fez.

FAVORITE PLACE TO SING — SHOWER OR CAR?: “I actually practice a lot in the car before gigs, just to try to remember the lyrics,” Gildersleeve says.





Ten Feet Deep



Double Down



Sweet 'n' Meaty

Double Down
doubledownct.com
WESTPORT

When Courtney Wilson got married, there was a quiet understanding between he and his wife that Wilson (who plays sax) would moonlight in a rock band when he wasn't running his own insurance wholesale company. So it came as no surprise that in 2001, when the couple left the city for Westport after the birth of their son Tyler, he began assembling the now very popular cover band Double Down. Made up of five core members (Wilson, Tommy Nagy, Mike Ventimiglia, Jay Gerbino and Bill Chiarelli), the band is a staple at private parties, charity events like the Beach Ball at Tod's Point and a handful of bars throughout Fairfield County such as Crab Shell in Stamford and Beach House Café in Old Greenwich. Playing everything from Sinatra to John Mayer, the band prides itself on its ability to read an audience and go with the flow. "Our goal is to play to the crowd," says Wilson, noting that the band will often stray from a planned set list if the situation calls for something different. "We're entertaining them with stuff that's going to make them stomp their feet and shake their rumps. It's our ability to adapt."

WHAT'S WILSON LISTENING TO NOW? The Beastie Boys

Sweet 'n' Meaty
sweetandmeaty.com
STAMFORD

Johnny Bates, Kevin Cavanaugh, Noah Buddy, Chuck Facas and Jim O'Mahony formed their band in 1986 when they were 16 years old. As teens, they recruited Cavanaugh from New York City to tour Fairfield County in a 1970s Volkswagen bus. They wear crazy costumes (think court jester hats, wigs, crowns and wild sunglasses) and play obscure cover songs like Maceo Parker's "Pass the Peas" to suit their '70s-era rock funk sound. As teenagers, the group

performed under the name The Ruse, until one night before a gig at Willow Street in Port Chester. Johnny, the drummer, showed up fresh from a family dinner during which his grandmother described the Japanese entrée Sukiyaki as "a delightful sweet and meaty dish." The name fit, and stuck. While their playful image may not show it, Bates says the band was "pretty serious at one point," as most of the members have degrees in the arts. Today the band loves to play their favorite haunt, Seaside Tavern, and just wants to have a good time. "We wouldn't quit our day jobs," Bates says.

FAVORITE PLACE TO REHEARSE: "Where else? Johnny's parents' garage," Bates says, noting that it's the same place they've been playing for 30 years.

Celestial Speed Limit
myspace.com/celestialspeedlimit
STAMFORD

You might have seen Celestial Speed Limit at one of its usual spots, like Crab Shell or Tiernan's Bar and Restaurant in Stamford, or Beach House Café in Old Greenwich. Sure, they're a rock band, but they are more than just a cover band. "We take a five-minute song and extend it to 10," Duncan says. "It makes it less about the original songs and makes it something more unique." The band's members — Paul Duncan on guitar and vocals, Adam Marianacci on bass, Jeff Engborg on the keyboard, Mike Shealy on drums and Anthony Truglio on guitar — are serious about music. While the band is not a full-time gig, all of them make music their full-time job, teaching, playing in other gigs and performing for other projects. The band rehearses in Stamford (a midpoint between where Shealy lives, Norwalk, and Duncan's home of Greenwich). Shealy and Duncan have known each other for about 15 years and built the band slowly, adding members until about three years ago. They play covers like "The Ocean" by Led Zeppelin, "Always On The Run" by Lenny Kravitz and "When You Were Young" by The Killers. "We play

all the bars," Duncan says. "We're big on rock songs people can dance to and groove."

MUSICAL INFLUENCE: Gov't Mule

Barnstorm!
barnstormband.com
SOUTH SALEM, NY

About 13 years ago, Anne-Marie Stewart, Birks Erksine, Mickey Mallardi and John Stuart gathered for a jam session in Anne-Marie's barn in South Salem, NY. They kept it low-key for a few years, just performing for friends and at the local watering hole The Horse and Hound Inn. While they still all have day jobs (Anne-Marie is a real estate agent, Mallardi is an architect, Erksine works at an insurance agency and Stuart works at an institutional asset management company), the band has graduated from the barn to more formal gigs (they now play private parties, weddings and bars) and added more members (Brian Coralian on drums and Paul Seymour on bass). Borrowing their name from the barn they first rehearsed in and the early days of aviation — when planes dove over barns in stunt performances called barnstorms — the group plays only cover tunes and describes itself as a country rock and Grateful Dead cover band. They frequent Bobby Q's in Westport, Beach House Café in Old Greenwich, The Shack Hometown Grill in Fairfield and The Ancient Mariner in Ridgefield.

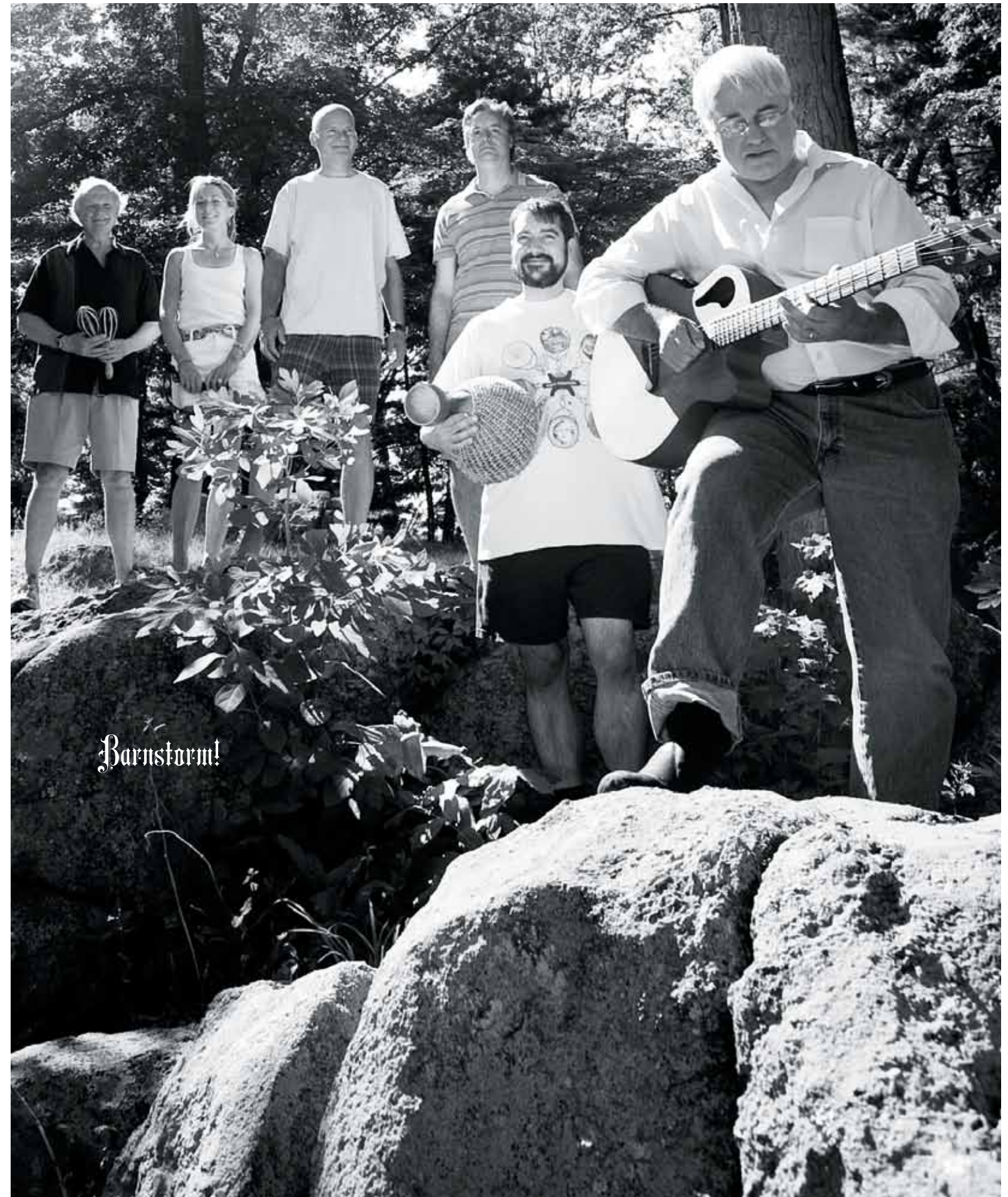
BIGGEST COMPLIMENT: "When people who go to weddings we play want us at their wedding two years later," Stuart says.

P.J. Pacifico
pjpacifico.com; viperrecords.com
NORWALK

Born and raised in Norwalk, P.J. Pacifico (no, not a stage name) played drums in high school, and loved it. But, when he eventually left home for college, he realized a drum set doesn't travel well. Thankfully, he received an acoustic guitar for graduation. Now the singer/songwriter works full-time



Celestial Speed Limit



Barnstorm!

in the music business, having spent the past three years touring the Mid-Atlantic, the Southeast and New England. While he has band members who play with him for some gigs close to home, Pacifico generally travels solo. He’s been signed with Indie label Viper Records (he’s released two albums) and divides his time between New York City, Norwalk and his couch, where he does most of his writing. “My stuff is starting to get some really good radio play now,” says Pacifico. “The other day my friend was like, ‘OMG, I totally heard you in Raymour & Flanigan.’ It’s weird. It’s like, what’s going to happen now?” When Pacifico is home, he’s got a weekly Sunday gig at Burger Bar & Bistro in SoNo and especially loves playing Infinity Hall in Norfolk (“It’s got a magical feel, like out of *Little House on the Prairie*.”).

GUILTY PLEASURE: “I rock out The Monkees hard. I’m not really ashamed of it because they have some great tunes. I also rock The Outfield. I’m not afraid of that; their hit record was called *Play Deep*. One of the best combination band name/album titles ever.”

The Short Bus
theshortbusrocks.com
GREENWICH

All but one member of The Short Bus graduated from Greenwich High School (the fifth, Ernie Albert, went to private school). One (Mark Zelenz) was an all-American swimmer there and another (Chuck Lovetri) was on the first state championship football team the school had ever seen. Now, nearly 30 years later, the group (including final two members Chris Goane and Kenny Muller) has logged seven years together, playing covers of bands such as The Beatles, Blink 182 and The Killers. The Short Bus has played block parties, Mohegan Sun, Tiernan’s in Stamford, Molly Darcy’s in Danbury and The Loft in SoNo. The band’s one rule? No original music. Each of the members writes his own music, but Lovetri says they all agree they’re in this for the fun of it. If they played original

music, the band would become too serious. In fact, the band never rehearses. “It’s difficult to get five guys together,” says Lovetri. And, with roughly 78 gigs a year (the number of shows they played in 2009) and full-time jobs and families for each member, there isn’t much time for it. **FAVORITE PLACE TO SING – SHOWER OR CAR?:** “I used to sing in the car, now I’d rather just listen to a Mets game,” says Lovetri.

Remember September
rememberseptemberband.com
TRUMBULL

Ironically, September is the one month of the year you won’t find this band rocking out to its original tunes like “Can’t Fix My Fixations” or “Innocence.” That’s when these five guys (three brothers — Chris, Jay and Eric Schod — with Gerard Awad on drums and Dave Savitsky on sax) take a break from performing to work on new songs. Unrelated to the time off, the Schods named the band after two family members who died that month. Remember September’s acoustic rock sound blends country, rock, jazz and blues, and has been compared to The Allman Brothers and Dave Matthews Band. Jay (the singer/songwriter of the group) has been playing music and singing since he was a teenager, but Remember September didn’t form as a typical teen garage band. Jay had been working on an album with Westport producer Alec Head when he broke his wrist snowboarding. His brother Chris filled in and, soon enough, a band was born. Eric just recently joined when he turned 21 (having a member under 21 proved difficult for this bar band) and Mary Albano began singing with them this summer. The group has performed everywhere from Chapel Hill, NC, to Toad’s Place in New Haven, even opening for big names like Chicago and Train. But their favorite is playing at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC. “To put a smile on these guys’ faces is so gratifying,” Jay says.

GUILTY PLEASURE: Anita Baker, says Jay.

Address Book

BEACH HOUSE CAFÉ
220 Sound Beach Ave., Old Greenwich;
203-637-0367, beachhousecafe.com

BOBBY Q’S
42 Main St., Westport; 203-454-7800,
bobbyqsrestaurant.com

BURGER BAR & BISTRO
58 N. Main St., Norwalk; 203-853-2037

CRAB SHELL
46 Southfield Ave., Stamford Landing,
Stamford; 203-967-7229, crabshell.com

INFINITY HALL
20 Greenwoods Road West, Norfolk;
866-666-6306, infinityhall.com

MOLLY DARCY’S
39 Mill Plain Road, Danbury; 203-794-0449

MURPHY’S TOWNHOUSE CAFÉ
97 Franklin St., Stamford; 203-325-1815

PONUS YACHT CLUB
41 Bateman Way, Stamford; 203-323-7157,
theponusyachtclub.com

REDDING ROAD HOUSE
406 Redding Road, West Redding;
203-938-3388, reddingroadhouse.com

SEASIDE TAVERN
891 Cove Road, Stamford; 203-964-9225,
seasidetavern.net

THE ANCIENT MARINER
451 Main St., Ridgefield; 203-438-4771

THE FEZ
227 Summer St., Stamford; 203-975-0479

THE HORSE AND HOUND INN
94 Spring St., South Salem, NY;
914-763-3108, thehorseandhoundinn.com

THE LOFT
97 Washington St., South Norwalk;
203-838-6555, theloftsono.com

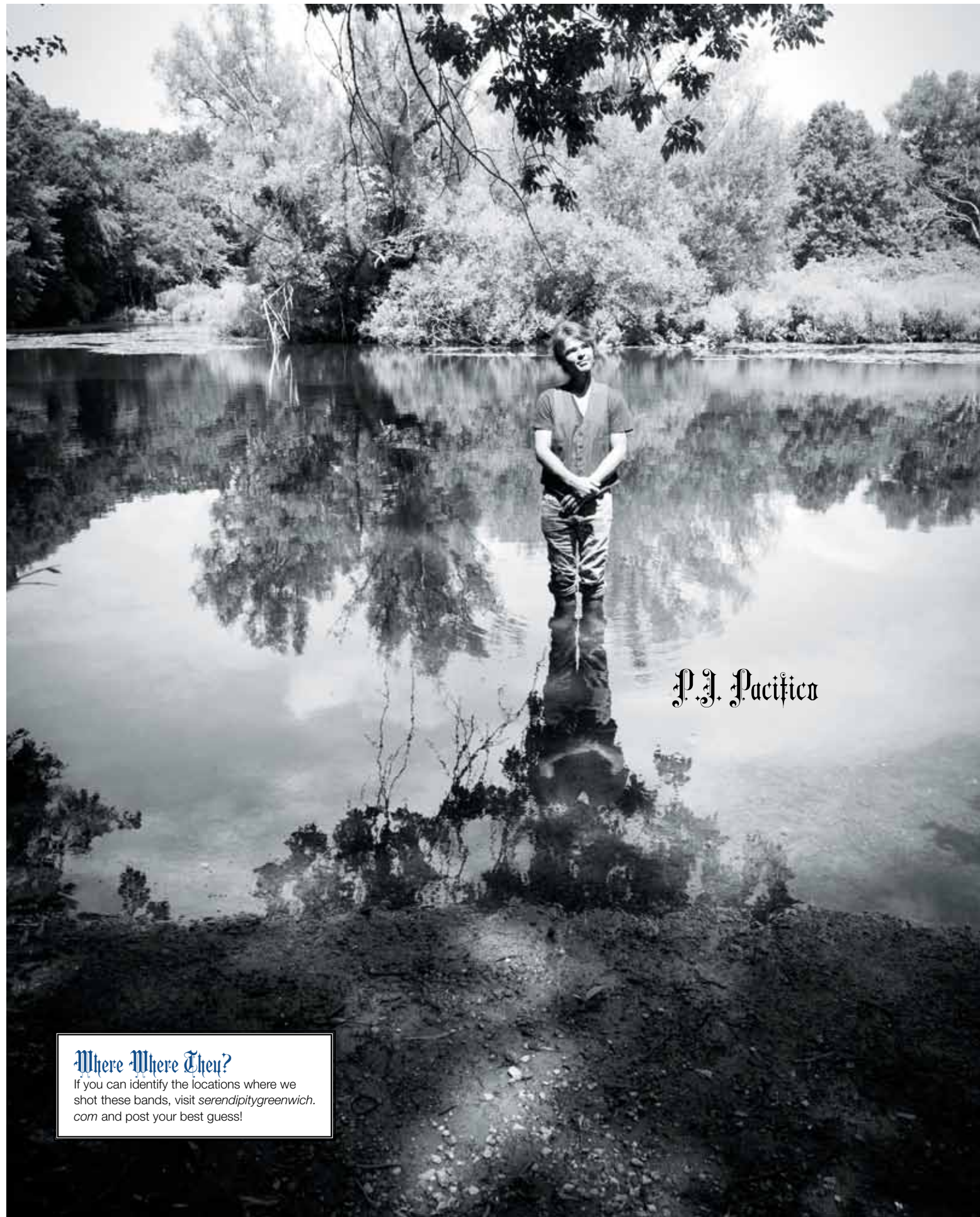
THE SHACK HOMETOWN GRILL
2070 Post Road, Fairfield; 203-254-3606

TIERNAN’S BAR AND RESTAURANT
187 Main St., Stamford; 203-353-8566,
tiernansbar.com

TIGIN IRISH PUB
175 Bedford St., Stamford; 203-353-8444,
tiginirishpub.com

TOAD’S PLACE
300 York St., New Haven; toadsplace.com





P.J. Pacific

Where Where They?

If you can identify the locations where we shot these bands, visit serendipitygreenwich.com and post your best guess!



The Short Bus

Remember September

